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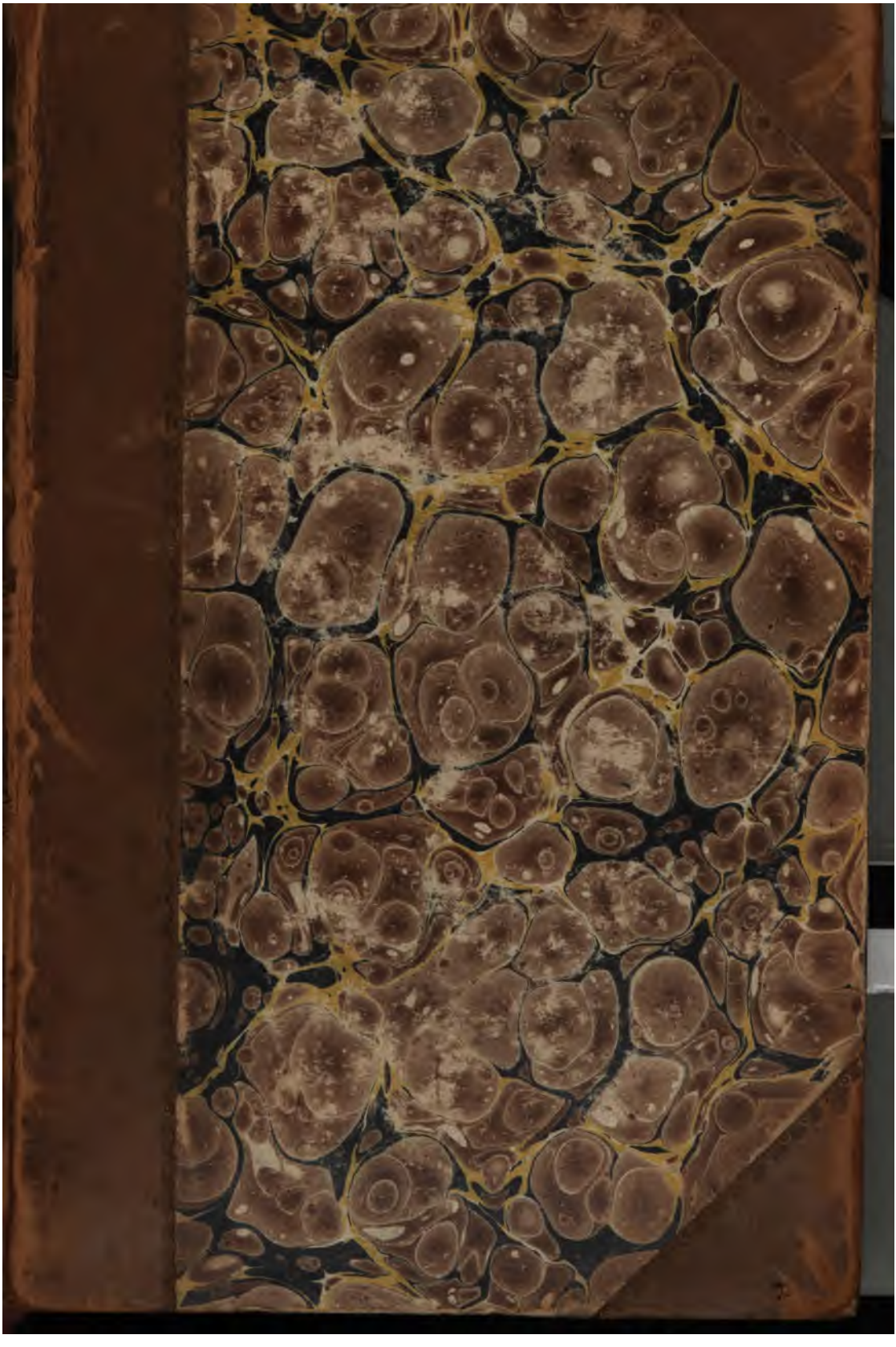

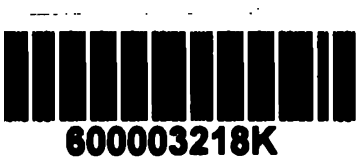
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THE CHRISTIAN EXODUS.

L. B. SEELEY, WESTON-GREEN, THAMES-DITTON.

S.H. 1826

THE CHRISTIAN EXODUS;

OR,

THE DELIVERANCE OF THE ISRAELITES FROM EGYPT

PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED,

IN A SERIES OF DISCOURSES:

BY THE REV. R. P. BUDDICOM, M.A. F.A.S.

MINISTER OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, EVERTON; AND LATE FELLOW OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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SERMON I.

THE SIN AND PUNISHMENT OF NADAB AND ABIHU.

LEVITICUS X. 1—3.

And Nadab, and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

Among the many and powerful evidences furnished by ancient history, to the truth of revelation, may be included the religious rites and ceremonies of heathen nations. Notwithstanding the foul and debasing superstitions with which they are mingled, and the grossness of worship to which they are devoted, we may

very often trace their origin to some command given by the Most High to the Jews, or to some miracle displayed by him in their favour;—as the stream, however vitiated by the soil through which it flows, or the uses to which it is applied, may be traced to the clear fountain whence it issued, and of whose purity it originally partook.

Among an almost endless variety of such instances, may be adduced the sacred fire, which burned continually in many shrines of Persia, Greece, and Rome. The custom was probably borrowed from that miraculous descent of fire upon the altar of burnt-offerings, which consumed the victim, and thus testified the divine acceptance of a vicarious sacrifice. This holy flame was carefully preserved among the Israelites, by a divine command, until the time of Solomon. It was then renewed, and continued burning until the Babylonish captivity.

From this fire, upon the altar of burnt-sacrifice, were taken the live coals to enkindle the incense, daily burned by the priests before the veil that concealed the ark, the mercy-seat, and the shekinah of God. None others were to be used: and every fire not so enkindled was an abomination to the majesty of heaven. Nadab and Abihu transgressed the prohibition, and died for their disobedience.

If the ceremonial institutions of the tabernacle and temple were shadows and sensible representatives of the offices of the Son of God, in the gracious and glorious process of his redeeming work, and of the disposition of his worshippers through every age of the Christian church, the history of Nadab and Abihu has a spiritual, as well as a literal meaning. It teaches us not to sin after the moral similitude of their transgression, lest we be recompensed by the wrath of heaven, after the moral similitude of their judgment. May the Spirit of Him, whose institutions they violated, whose sacrifice they undervalued, whose intercession they neglected, give us wisdom and grace to hear and fear, and do not so wickedly!

The two leading facts which strike us in this brief, but awful history, are,

I. THE OFFENCE of NADAB AND ABIHU.

II. THE PUNISHMENT WITH WHICH THEY WERE VISITED.

I. The tabernacle had been finished and dedicated. Aaron, and his four sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, had been consecrated to the priesthood. The victims had been slain: Moses and Aaron had solemnly blessed the congregation: and the requirements of God had been fulfilled. "The glory of the

Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat, which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces."[1]

At this moment, when all the tribes and multitudes of Israel were prostrated before the Lord, and loud in expressions of holy joy and reverence, Nadab and Abihu broke the blessed harmony existing between God and the camp; and brought his wrath upon their own heads. "They took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not." In so doing they committed,

(1.) *A rash and presumptuous offence.* God had arranged every part of the service of his sanctuary, with the most scrupulous minuteness. He had sent fire from heaven to supply the altar of burnt-sacrifice; and from this flame the incense was to be always enkindled. Now surely it was not for the very men, whom he had made the guardians of his will, and administrators of his service, to disobey the one, and change the other. Their whole procedure was careless and irreverent in no common degree. The incense was to be burned about the

[1] Levit. ix. 24.

time of morning and evening sacrifice. They seem to have taken their censers for this service, at another part of the day. One priest alone was to officiate. They presented themselves *together* before the golden altar, in the holy place. They had no order to officiate; for all the solemnities of this memorable day had been entrusted to their father Aaron. They aggravated their offence, by neglecting to take of that fire which had just before fallen so miraculously from heaven; and by enkindling the incense at a common unhallowed flame. Nay, we may probably collect from the 8th, and following verses, that, after feasting on the sacrifice, they approached the Lord under the inebriating influence of wine, and strong drink.

Are not delinquents, like Nadab and Abihu, still found in Christian temples, offering incense before the Lord, in a manner which he has not commanded, and therefore which he cannot approve? When professing worshippers bring into the house of prayer zeal without knowledge—culpable misapprehensions of the character of God—carnal affections—earthly, light, vain, trifling thoughts—the devices of a will-worship, which they have substituted for the offering of soul and spirit required by him, the incense is enkindled by a flame which never descended from heaven, which the Spirit of a

holy God never introduced within their hearts; but which owes its origin to the suggestions of unsanctified and carnal minds, at enmity with him. *The voice is Jacob's voice; but the hands are the hands of Esau.* Such worshippers rashly intrude into the divine presence. They have neglected the solemn precept, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil." *God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* The Father seeketh such to worship him. The splendour of external service, unaccompanied by the offering of a broken and contrite spirit, can never fulfil his requirement. Reverence of his greatness, hope in his mercy, gratitude for his love, desire for his salvation, and prayer for the transforming influence of his grace, can alone prove that our lips have been touched, our incense enkindled, our hearts and service sanctified, by living coals from the altar of the Redeemer's sacrifice; and that we are not drawing nigh to him with the prayer that proceedeth out of feigned lips. In the one case we presumptuously offer a carnal and forbidden oblation; in the other, a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

(2.) *The offence of Nadab and Abihu was*

also highly dishonourable to the Lord. The very minuteness and accuracy with which the whole ceremonial ritual had been defined, must have taught the men to whose care it was entrusted, with what jealousy the Most High regarded any infringement of his commands. When it is also remembered, that the fire which came down from heaven was the type and symbol of pardon of sin, and redemption from death, shadowed forth in the accepted victims, all attempt to use another flame, taken, it might be, from that employed in the most common purposes of life, was a flagrant insult against the majesty and mercy of Jehovah. When it is moreover considered, that the incense shadowed forth the intercession made for the souls of Israel, and for the acceptance of their persons and services, we may well be amazed at the conduct of men, who, admitted into the more intimate secrets of God, thus despised ordinances which he himself had given, and poured contempt on his purposes of love.

Do you ask, how the case is applicable to the circumstances of Christians in private or public worship? I answer—it applies with the same fitness, with which every type and emblem refers to the circumstances of the Gospel church. "The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world," hath bled upon the altar of the

cross. *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all;* and the wrath of a sin-avenging God consumed the mortal nature which his eternal Son had taken, in order to make the full atonement for transgressors. The great High Priest is passed into the heavens. He has not only sprinkled the mercy-seat above with his blood; but he stands before it, with the incense of his resistless intercession. Without the shedding of that blood, there is no remission of sins. Without the employment and success of that High Priesthood there is no acceptance with God. In the incense then, which we profess to offer—in the supplications which we address to the throne of grace, whether from the privacy of the closet, or the congregation of the people, do we draw nigh in any other manner than that which the Most High has appointed? Is the fire, by which the prayer must be wafted up to heaven, inflamed at the altar of burnt-sacrifices? No man can come in supplication well pleasing to the Father, except by Christ. And, as the way to the golden altar of incense lay by the brazen altar of burnt-offering, so neither can any worshipper approach Jesus Christ, acceptably pleading his intercession, who comes not to the cross whereon he died, to remove guilt; and "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." How then do we come before the Lord? Is it

with strange fire in our censers,—an unhallowed, unbidden, and unblest influence, operating on our spirits in prayer? Forgetful of the righteousness of God, are we going about to establish our own? And, instead of enkindling the ardour of prayer for mercy, by adoring gratitude, for the blessings of a crucified Saviour, are we "denying the Lord who bought us?" and neglecting to "enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus?" Do we in short, present ourselves before the Lord, in an unhumbled frame of mind, without feeling our demerit as transgressors? Do we make our suit to the insulted Majesty of heaven, without that sacrifice of Christ's intercession, which only is acceptable unto the Father? Then in vain do we worship him. Nay, the worship is not merely ineffectual, it pours a premeditated contempt and dishonour on the plan of his salvation; and on the astonishing exercise of his love. It despises the manifestations of that compassion, which, when no other scheme of mercy that human or angelic imagination might suggest, availed to deliver, interposed with the gift of his Son;—constituted him a victim to atone, and a priest to offer incense; invested him with every glory of mediatorial power; and made him *able to save to the uttermost all them that come to God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

How it is possible, that they who neglect or refuse the mediation of Jesus Christ, in earth, and heaven, on Calvary, and before the throne, should be clear from the tremendous guilt of dishonouring Him who gave his Son as the only salvation for man, I cannot tell, and pretend not to imagine. Sometimes, when the subject presses upon my mind, I seem to hear that voice, which addressed the Prophet in the valley of his vision, and cried, *Son of man, can these bones live?* I can only answer, *O Lord God, thou knowest.* But, as an appointed watchman of your souls, I should sin against them, against my own, and against the adorable Trinity, who devised the gracious plan for their common salvation, did I not warn you of the sin and dishonour committed against the inconceivably gracious appointments of the Most High, by those who consider themselves independent of the cross and intercession of the Saviour Jesus Christ. *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

(3.) It may also be added, that *the sin of Nadab and Abihu, threatened the utmost danger to the tribes of Israel.* They had been solemnly consecrated priests; they were to minister to, and instruct, the people in holy things.

The general worship would receive its tone and character from their conduct. If they approached the divine presence irregularly, or irreverently, it might become a sin to the men of Israel; like the idol calf which Aaron made. The error might spread. The first defection might lead to other acts of disobedience: and the chosen tribes, seduced from their allegiance, might perish beneath the wrath of heaven. Concerning every part of the tabernacle furniture, it was said, "Look that thou make it after the pattern which was showed thee in the mount." And if the Lord required conformity so exact, in matters merely external, what, suppose ye, will be their guilt, who lead others from the appointed method of salvation; who burn incense with forbidden fire; and cast before their brethren a stumbling stone and a rock of offence, over which some may fall to their lasting injury, and some may fall to rise again no more for ever. Suppose ye, that such differences in religion are of trifling import; and that it little concerns the worshipper to be exact in the way of his access, or scrupulous in the articles of his creed? St. Paul taught as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.—The Spirit of God spake by his voice, and dictated to his pen. Hear ye therefore, his deep, solemn, well-weighed denunciation against those who under-

valued Christ Jesus as the only justification for sinners: and then judge if it be indifferent to the Most High, whether we worship him according to his appointment, or our own; by humble faith in Jesus Christ, or depending upon ourselves? *There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ: but though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.* Every Christian, and more especially every Christian of influence, is charged with a double duty. He must draw nigh to God, by repentance towards him, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; and he must hold forth the same way-marks of life to others. If he be faithful, he may convert sinners from the error of their ways, and save souls alive. If he be self-willed or ignorant, the blind are leading the blind, and both shall fall into the ditch. Would to God, that every one, who is positively or virtually denying the sacrifice and mediation of the only Saviour, and teaching others so to do would remember, and tremble at, and flee from, the condemnation of that most awful saying, *Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.*

Sin and the visitations of divine wrath are

as inseparably connected with each other, as light with the appearance of the sun, or darkness, with his retirement from the heavens.

II. THE PUNISHMENT OF NADAB AND ABIHU demands therefore, our next consideration. "There went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." Many solemn warnings are left on record by the Holy Spirit, to deter men from pretending to do God service, in any other method than that which he hath himself ordained. Saul sacrificed a burnt offering, without the authority or permission of the Most High; and it was numbered among the offences for which the kingdom was taken away from him. Uzziah went into the temple to burn unbidden incense. The priests withstood him, according to their duty, and would have made him desist from the profanation; but he refused, and was smitten for his disobedience with a leprosy, incurable to the day of his death. Uzzah put forth his hand to stay the ark, when the oxen shook it. "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and he died by the ark of God."

The penalty inflicted upon the crime of Nadab and Abihu was *death*, agreeably to that awful declaration, *The soul that doeth presumptously, whether he be born in the land or a stranger, the*

same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him. The bodies of these rash offenders were not consumed by the fire; their garments were not burned; but they died—probably, as those who are smitten by lightning. *They died before the Lord;* that is, before the veil that covered the mercy-seat. And is there no voice for us in the fearful import of this remark? There is indeed. It tells us in language, to which the holy dread of our hearts should loudly respond, that even the goodness of God, the best exercise of his love in Jesus Christ, the manifestation of his presence, when the propitiatory blood of his son is pleading for transgressors, will itself avenge the violations of his law, and demand the punishment of those who wilfully and presumptously neglect or transgress the conditions of salvation. He will assuredly magnify his law, and make it honourable; if not by the recovery of sinners, yet by their punishment. To alter the mode of access and acceptance,—to invent new methods of worship,—to contemn the appointment of infinite wisdom and love, for human redemption,—to add to, or diminish from, the word which the Lord hath spoken, must necessarily call down

his indignation upon the offender. Men too frequently suppose, that if they are at all employed in the worship of God, the difference is small, whether it be conducted according to the metaphysical reveries of the Arian, who denies the essential and eternal deity of Jesus; to the daring infidelity of the Socinian, who banishes the whole stupendous scheme of salvation by the cross from his cold and scanty creed; or even to the desperate imaginations of the Deist, who spurns at the whole plan of revelation, and who if there be only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, lives without him in the world. *There is a way which seemeth right in the eyes of a man: but the end thereof are the ways of death.* Never let it be supposed, that a fancied sincerity will suffice to clear us of the guilty dishonour thus done to the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. *If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.* And as ours is a contest for life or death, if we win not the crown proposed, the consequences of our defeat are final and hopeless woe. If sincerity might atone for the falsity of religion, then, every superstition with which the earth is cursed,—every rite of cruelty and lust,—all the nameless and numberless atrocities, at which we shudder, would be acceptable with God,—or at least would be viewed

with an excusing partiality. God in Christ Jesus hath delivered that religion which we must accept and live, or reject and die. If we alter it,—especially to offer strange fire, to the dishonour of his Son, who must be the atonement for our sins, the medium of our prayers, the author and finisher of our faith, the Alpha and Omega of our salvation, our hope on earth, our bliss in heaven, he will blot out our names from the book of life. If we reject the terms of mercy, *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.* That judgment may not be temporal, may not be immediate; but it will assuredly be issued against us, in the disclosures and rewards of the last day, when the office and exercise of mercy will have ceased for ever.

The *manner* in which the punishment was inflicted is not less instructive than the punishment itself. "There went out fire from the Lord and consumed them." They sinned by offering strange fire, instead of that which came from heaven, and they perished by fire strangely sent upon them from the God whom they had offended. Had the incense been consumed agreeably to the divine appointment, it would have brought a blessing upon themselves, and favour upon the camp. But now the very element which should have testified the acceptance of their prayers,

is employed to destroy these unhappy men. They were doomed to feel the terrors of that fire which they could not be induced to reverence. Never let us indulge a delusion so destructive of peace, of hope, of happiness, as to imagine, that the provided and offered salvation of the gospel looks upon us with an aspect of indifference; and that we may accept or reject the sacrifice and pleading of the Lamb of God, without any beneficial or injurious consequences. If the incense of our worship be not enkindled at the altar of the Redeemer's sacrifice—if we pretend to worship God, independently of his Son, and expect aceeptance, we are fearfully and fatally deceived. If we have not fled to his atonement, and be not marked by it for life, it must testify against us. If his intercession be not exerted in our behalf, it must plead as our adversary before the throne of heaven. Never yet did sinner live, in whose hands the gospel of Christ crucified was placed, whom that gospel left in a state of neutrality towards him. If it be not a savour of life unto life, because mercy is despised, it will be a savour of death unto death, because mercy will be avenged. What then, is our duty, as professing believers in the scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ; and what the awful sanctions, by which that duty is enforced? The apostle shall declare;—and as you value life and

heaven, beware that he speak not in vain. *Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.*

We shall greatly fail in that personal and individual application which is the very end of Scripture, if we omit to profit by the solemn warning which this history conveys. "Then Moses said unto Aaron, this is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me; and before all the people I will be glorified." They who immediately approached the Lord, were the priests who served in the tabernacle; and were separated from the presence of Jehovah, only by the vail which hid the Shekinah from their view. The punishment of Nadab and Abihu conveys an awful caution *to the ministers of the gospel.* God will be sanctified by them. He demands from them a service in his sanctuary exactly and conscientiously conformable to the Scriptures of eternal truth and love. *Command indeed is laid upon them: and woe unto them if they preach not the gospel!* Is it for them to offer strange fire before the Lord—to preach any other faith, than that which God himself hath revealed in his word? Shall they encourage you in the belief, that ye may slight the cross or the pleading of Jesus Christ and live? While they inculcate, as

the heralds of a pure and spotless faith, *that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord,* shall they permit you to suppose you may neglect the only foundation of a sinner's hope, and yet build securely for eternal bliss? Shall any worldly motive, any fear of man, any love of applause, any mean and contemptible desire of distinction, induce them to swerve from the holy commandment committed unto them? Or shall they not "take heed to themselves and to the doctrine; that in so doing they may both save themselves and those who hear them?"

But, my brethren, this *Scripture has also a warning voice from God to* YOU, *not less than to your ministers*—"Before *all the people* I will be glorified." "He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Approach him in the way of his own especial appointment, with incense kindled at the altar, with prayers that seek acceptance, and service that hopes reward, because Jesus Christ your surety and representative died and lives in your behalf. What shall you do to be saved? Believe on him and you shall be saved. Adorn his doctrine in all things, by holy godly lives; and his love shall rest upon you. What come ye here to see? a reed shaken by the wind? Nay, but matters of the most solemn concernment, to

which the eye and heart of men can be directed. Endeavour to improve them. Endeavour to see the Redeemer in all the exercises of his religion; and the blessing of the ordinances shall abide with you.

And when the hour of affliction and bereavement comes, strive to imitate the holy resignation of Aaron. A moment before this catastrophe, he was the happy father of four sons, all dedicated to the solemnities of the priesthood, and to a most distinguished station among the ranks of Israel. By a judgment, as tremendous as sudden, two were smitten and slain with fire from the Lord: yet when Moses spake on the part of Jehovah, Aaron held his peace. *He set a watch over his tongue, and kept the door of his lips.* No murmuring word escaped him; no repining thought seems to have mingled its bitterness and poison with the allowed and necessary sorrow of parental love. The example, awful as it was, became necessary, in order to vindicate the divine glory: and what was the language of Aaron's heart? "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." In all this he sinned not; neither charged God foolishly. Amidst all the sufferings which this loss excited, he owned the justice of the Lord; and mourned in submissive silence. The hour of sorrow will arrive. Affliction will try, bereavement will

distress. Learn at such a season to imitate the priest of God, in his holy submission. Learn to imitate a still higher model; and to pray with him who bore the infinite load of human transgression, and fainted beneath it, in the garden of Gethsemene, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Look for the Almighty sufficiency of the Holy Spirit, to enable you to cry with David, "I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth." If affliction find you in this state of mind, or produce it within you, through the blessing of divine grace on its visitation, it will be a messenger of mercy, though it should assume a forbidding aspect. It may be a bitter, but it will be a salutary medicine. Live by faith. Realize the wisdom, goodness, love and fidelity of your God. Learn in the school of humble belief, that *all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth, to them that keep his covenant and his testimonies.* And then, if in the hour of your affliction, the voice of Christian sympathy should ask you, as the prophet asked the Shunamite, when her child lay dead, Is all well? you may answer, in the chastened resignation of her soul, All is well.

SERMON II.

THE CHARACTER OF THE JUBILEE, AND THE MODE OF ITS PROCLAMATION.

LEVITICUS XXV. 8—10.

Thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years: and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

THE great object of the gospel is to assure us that "God hath given us eternal life; and that this life is in his Son." Accordingly, every intellectual endowment of man, in its highest and

best exercise, has been employed to demonstrate by its internal evidence, the divine inspiration of the New Testament. Nor has the other part of the sacred volume been forgotten. The law and the prophets give their strong attestation to the mind whence they proceeded, as well as to the purpose for which they were designed. They also testify, that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." They contain statements, utterly and hopelessly at variance with the infidel supposition of fraud and falsehood; and in no part more frequently, or more particularly, than in the five books of Moses. This part of the Bible has been triumphantly proved, from internal testimony, to contain the true sayings of God; and to demand the implicit confidence of all who desire to "believe to the saving of the soul."

The institution of the sabbatical year, and of the year of jubilee, furnishes undeniable evidence of the truth of the Mosaic history. The people of Israel were not permitted to cultivate their land, during either of these two periods. They would naturally ask—and the question was anticipated, "What shall we eat? Behold, we shall not sow nor gather in our increase.—What is the reply to this startling question? "I will command my blessing upon you, in the sixth year; and it shall bring forth fruit for

three years." Here then, the men of Israel were required to depend for their subsistence upon the miracle which the word of Jehovah had pledged to work in their behalf. Now, I would ask, in the language of an admirable writer, 'Is it credible that any legislator would have ventured to propose such a law as this, or any people have submitted to receive it; except in consequence of the fullest conviction on both sides, that a divine authority had dictated the law, and that a peculiar providence would constantly facilitate its execution? When such a law therefore, was proposed and received, such a conviction must have existed, both in the Jewish lawgiver, and the Jewish people.'[1] No impostor would have ventured on a pledge so desperate: or if he had, the deception would have been speedily and effectually exposed. Nay more, the possessors of estates acquired by purchase, were called upon to resign them fully and freely in the year of jubilee, to those from whom they had passed. It is, however, impossible to imagine, that the call would have been obeyed, in opposition to the common right, and to the strong pleadings of the love of gain, unless the hosts of Israel had been assured, that

[1] Dean Graves' Lectures on the Four last Books of the Pentateuch. Vol. I. page 171.

God had spoken by the lips of Moses. The inference then, is as clear as moral evidence can make it, that the miracles wrought in attestation of the Mosaic mission were undoubtedly real; and therefore, the mission itself undoubtedly divine.

In this conclusion however, I trust we are all agreed: and as the history of this very important and significant institution has a practical and spiritual character, applicable to this later age of the church, it is alike our duty and advantage to consider it under such an aspect. Taking this ground, two subjects solicit our regard.

I. THE JUBILEE ITSELF.

II. THE MODE OF ITS PROCLAMATION.

I. Every inquiry into the appointments of the Jewish church and people demands our first regard to their immediate and literal purport; although their best significancy, their highest value, their greatest perfection, are derived from reference to Him, in whose offices of salvation they were all accomplished. It must be observed, therefore, that the Jubilee had

(1.) *A primary or political design.* As every man's inheritance was necessarily to return to him, the moment the trumpet ushered in this season of joy, the poor, the improvident,

the unfortunate, could not be always oppressed. The slave could not be kept in continual bondage. The rich could not accumulate all the lands, and establish a permanent monopoly of wealth. Liberty and property were thus secured from entire and enduring loss, in a manner more effectual than was afterwards known, until Christianity shed its peaceful glories over the world, and gave extent and stability to civil liberty, by the mild and merciful sanctions of the law of Christ. The inheritance possessed by every man, in the original division of the promised land, was thus prevented from alienation, beyond the limited period of fifty years. This festival served, in an eminent degree, to verify the prophecies regarding the descent of the Messiah. It obliged the tribes and families, throughout the land of Israel, to preserve their genealogies distinct and clear: because, when the day of Jubilee returned, every man who had alienated his patrimony, and conveyed away the heritage of his fathers, must have been prepared to prove his particular relationship, in order that he might establish his claim, and return in competence or plenty to his own possession, and to his own family[1]. It was thus eventually and

[1] See Horne's Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Vol. III. p. 346.

exactly ascertained, from the public registers and genealogies of the land, that the Saviour of man, the promised Shiloh, the universal ransom of a lost and captive world, should be born of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David, according to the sure word of prophecy, which went before concerning him.

I am quite aware, that some of these designs contemplated by the Most High, in the recurrence of the year of Jubilee, are not defensible, merely upon those principles of political and economical science, which are now generally recognized. But I am equally certain, that infinite wisdom knew them to be exactly calculated to promote the real happiness and prosperity of this people, under the peculiar circumstances of the time. I am also persuaded, that in the universal revelation of the last day, when the course of Providence will shine distinct and clear, in the brightness that shall issue from the throne of heaven; and when every cloud that concealed the plans and purposes of God from our understanding, in this world of ignorance and gloom, shall be dispersed for ever, the scoffer who arraigns, and the Christian who adores God for his dealing, will own, that in every period of the world, all the ways of the Lord, and all his institutions among the

nations of mankind, were guided by a harmony of knowledge and love, in proportion to which the wisest schemes of human benevolence are less than a grain of sand to the universe. It will then be known, that he who did all things, did all things well.

(2.) *The secondary or spiritual design of the Jubilee* is, however, that, with which we are principally concerned, as men who come to the house of God, not to discuss the fitness of political institutions, but to be made "wise unto salvation, through faith, that is, in Christ Jesus." That a spiritual design really existed, we have the most ample and satisfactory testimony. The Jubilee is unquestionably alluded to in the rapture of the evangelical prophet, where he hears in spirit the voice of the future Immanuel, crying, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Sion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of*

praise for the spirit of heaviness[1]. This very passage, in which the blessed office of the Prince of Peace is so beautifully shadowed forth, was read by Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth: and when he had finished it he cried, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.* As though he had said "I am come to sound the trumpet of the Jubilee indeed, and to declare the substance, reality, and fulness of those mercies, present and future, temporal and everlasting which were typified in the festival proclaimed by Moses to your ancestors." Is it asked, in what manner the Jubilee prefigured the dispensation of love under the gospel of Jesus Christ? I answer,

1. *It liberated every slave and bond-servant among the tribes of Israel.* No sooner did the trumpet utter that peculiar and joyful sound, which the throbbing heart of every man interested therein would immediately recognize, than the captive stood up in his dungeon, and his fetters fell from his feet. The bondman left the house of his slavery, and felt himself possessed of liberty which no hand of power, or of fraud, might invade. Behold, my brethren, the gracious design of the everlasting gospel. It finds us helplessly obnoxious

[1] Isaiah lxi. 1—3.

to the wrath of God. It finds us under captivity to the bondage of the law. The obedience demanded by its stern and unrelenting authority, must be perfect, unceasing, universal. The penalty of sinning against it is eternal death. But lo, the day of Jubilee is come! The gospel has provided the ransom. *Christ hath delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* A righteousness is prepared, which human excellence or angelic purity could never have furnished to sinners. Is the transgressor left alone? The law exclaims, "Pay me that thou owest;" and the relentless creditor wreaks his wrath upon the bankrupt debtor. But the Jubilee is sounded; the page of mercy in the gospel is opened; liberty is proclaimed to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. The obligations of the law, as a rule of life, remain, and are enlarged: but when the prisoner stretches forth his affections to receive and appropriate the ransom of a Saviour's death, the glad sound of the gospel Jubilee, received into his heart, becomes the signal of his deliverance.

There is also a bondage to the power of sin and Satan, from which the jubilee of redeeming mercy can alone deliver. *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his*

servants ye are to whom ye obey? Now the God of this world rules in the minds of the children of disobedience. The natural and unconverted man is employed by this enemy of his soul to earn the wages of sin. He is in a state of spiritual captivity. Samson was not more helplessly bound by the fetters of the princes of Philistia, when his hair was shorn, and his strength departed, than is man by Satan and by sin, before the grace of God visits and liberates him. That grace reaches him in the gospel. He flies to embrace it: the prison doors are opened to him; and he walks abroad, "in the liberty wherewith Christ makes him free." The gospel comes *to open his eyes, to turn him from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Justification from the penalty of the broken law goes hand in hand with sanctification from the love of iniquity. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes him free from the law of sin and death." *The prey is taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered.* Evil will indeed be present with the believer through all his walk. The elder principle will struggle with the younger; nature will strive with the influence of divine life within him. He must still frequently cry with the great apostle, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

But, if he have truly fled to the cross, truly embraced Jesus Christ, as his almighty deliverer, sin shall not have dominion over him; and he shall add, as he finds himself strengthened for resistance, and delivered from the love and power of iniquity, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!* While he feels his heart enlarged to run the way of the commandments, he shall look back upon his past captivity with shame and sorrow. He shall contemplate the mercies of his better state, with that deep gratitude and love, which are the genuine impulses of Christian obedience. *O Lord, other Lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but henceforth in thee only will we make mention of thy name.*

2. It must be added, that *the Jubilee restored every man to his own possession, and every man to his own family.* The day dawned, the trumpet sounded, the bondman set forth, with his wife and children, and all that he had, to dwell in the bosom of his family, and to possess once more his patrimony and property, in peace and liberty. However alienated, however unworthily or unthriftily sold, however strongly conveyed to the purchaser, or to the usurper, this long expected day annulled the whole transaction, and placed him in the condition which either himself or his ancestor had formerly enjoyed. Now what are the circumstances of

sinful man, before the Jubilee of his Saviour's love sounds in his ears, and is received into his heart? He has forfeited the inheritance with which the goodness of his heavenly Father had so richly endowed him. The image of God is defaced within him. He has sold his high and heavenly birth-right, with all its spiritual privileges, like Esau, for a thing of nought. He has bartered the friendship of the Most High, the light of his presence, the possession of his mercies, the hopes of his kingdom, for some unreal and vanishing phantom of earthly and sinful good. The sword of the cherubim is turning every way to hinder him from re-entering paradise, and putting forth his hand, and taking of the tree of life, and living for ever by obedience to the covenant of works. It may be, that he has wasted his substance in riotous living; and has begun to be in want of every mercy which a transgressor needs, to save him from wrath, and enable him to stand before the judge with hopeful anticipation of acceptance. But the voice of mercy addresses him in the gospel. His eyes open upon the light of the great jubilee. He sees the lost possession yet before him. And though, in the lowly contrition of a broken heart, he cries, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," yet do the riches of the

promises encourage him to hope, that he shall receive the privileges of a child, and hear the voice of his eternal Father, say, "Son all that I have is thine." He closes with the invitation of mercy. The forfeiture is taken off; he is restored to the family of heaven; and receives the Spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, "Abba, Father." *He is no more a stranger and a foreigner, but a fellow citizen with the Saints, and of the household of God. He is begotten again to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* He is reinstated in every alienated possession. He has peace with God: he has the imparted sanctification of a Christian character: and he has that sure and certain hope of an eternal reversion, in which he is able to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." In the present communion of saints, he has delighted intercourse with the family of heaven: and ere long, he shall come to the general assembly and church of the first born; and take his part among the inheritance of the saints in light; drawing from a fountain of happiness, of which the depth is unfathomable, and the flow eternal. Is it thus with any here? *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon you, that ye should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are ye the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what you shall be; but you*

know, that when he shall appear, you shall be like him: for you shall see him as he is.

II. It was not enough, that the year and day of the great jubilee should come round in silence; lest some dispirited child of Abraham, wearied and worn down with servitude, should allow it to pass by him in listlessness, or doubt, or despair. How then was it proclaimed? "Thou shalt call the trumpet of the jubilee to sound in the tenth day of the seventh month; in the day of the atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land." In like manner is the gospel mercy proclaimed, and the tidings of salvation spread abroad by the voice of its preachers, and after the command of its Almighty author: *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* The trumpet on this glad occasion gave forth a peculiar note throughout the tents and tribes of Israel; whence, probably, the festival had its name. And does the gospel utter an uncertain sound? Do its glad tidings of great joy resemble any other which have been proclaimed in the history of man? May the message of the Saviour's love—the wonders of his life—the overpowering mystery of his death—and all the astonishing circumstances of his mediatorial work, from the first promise of redemption, to its consummation in judgment, be likened to aught beside? As-

surely not. A miracle of goodness would have been exhibited, if the provisions of the gospel had been merely made for man, and no means taken to press them upon his heart: but this manifestation of compassion sufficed not the riches of our father's tenderness. He bids his ministers proclaim long and loudly, earnestly and affectionately, the offers of pardon and peace, the promises of bliss and heaven, to every penitent and believing supplicant for mercy. *We are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* In his name, and by his authority, we cry to every one dead in trespasses and sins, enslaved by the bondage of an evil heart of unbelief, which departs from the living God, and having alienated his rich inheritance of spiritual blessings, *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat. Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*

The Jewish trumpet sounded through the land on the eventful day of jubilee, that all might hear, and that every one might avail himself of its merciful appointment. Thus plainly does the gospel speak to you, that you

may arise and profit by its ministrations of goodness; that you may obtain redemption through the blood of Christ, even the remission of sins; and with that remission, a restoration to your possessions and hopes as part of the ransomed people of the Most High. "Unto you," saith the Spirit of wisdom, "I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men." *Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound*—that possess an experimental acquaintance with all the wonders of its mercy—that feel their debts cancelled, their liberty restored, their birthright as the children of God recovered, their duties defined, their weakness strengthened, their ignorance enlightened, their zeal quickened, their love refined; their faith invigorated, and every holy impulse of renewed minds kindled into glowing exercise, as a pledge and proof that the day of the Lord's redemption has dawned upon them. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Imagine the delight with which the debtor, the bondman, the poor outcast from the lot of his fathers, would listen to the trumpet peal on this day of liberty and restoration! What then, should be the joy, what the delight, what the overflowing rapture, with which you should hear the offers of the gospel made, with this individual application, *Men and brethren, unto each of you is the word of this salvation sent?*

Would the slave, fainting beneath his burden, would the poor destitute spendthrift, on whom poverty and want had come, like an armed man, have slumbered in his chains, unawakened, and uninterested by the loud call of the trumpet on this eventful day? And shall they, whom sin and Satan have enslaved—shall they, to whom the remembrance of their sins should be grievous, and the burden intolerable, remain heedless of the invitation, heedless of their own woeful state, heedless of the Father's grace, the Son's cross, the Spirit's loud and powerful call? The day of jubilee will soon be past, and the offers of mercy will then cease for ever. *Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation.'* The proclamation of liberty is made, and the call is gone forth; "Return ye every man to his own inheritance, as a son through the spirit of adoption, and every man to his own family, as a member of the household above." *To-day then, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.* The gospel sounds loudly, to solicit your regard. We must lift our voices like a trumpet, and make the most unreserved proclamation of the day of mercy. *See that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*

Now is the Jubilee of divine compassion: ere long another trumpet will peal its awful summons through the world, and sound forth the

jubilee of eternal judgment. The dead will then be released from the bondage of the grave. And what will then be their glorious lot who shall have been made free from sin, and partakers of a spiritual adoption into the family above; and who shall come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God?— "They will join the heavenly Jubilee, celebrated by thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand of angels, and of the Spirits of just men made perfect, who have loved the Lord in this world, and maintained his cause, and proclaimed his glory, evermore praising him, and saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." [1] Captivity will be no more; sorrow will be unknown; death will be slain; life and peace, joy and bliss, will be uninterrupted; the vision of God entire; the day of blessedness undimmed by a single cloud; the society of the Saviour unbroken and eternal. O, my brethren, with what grateful love should your souls respond to the proclamation of the gospel Jubilee, with all its unspeakably momentous consequences.

[1] Buchanan's Sermon on the Jubilee.

And, if the heralds of that ancient jubilee, who loved their suffering, mourning, captive, bereaved countrymen, would sound the trumpet of their deliverance, with a glad and grateful breath; surely the ministers of the Christian altar who watch for your souls, and to whom they ought to be unspeakably dear, should delight to shew you words whereby ye may be saved and blessed for ever. *Unto us who are less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that we should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.* O, that it may be a common sound of mercy, a common theme of love to us all! And that, in the final day, in the last and long jubilee of a ransomed world, and a glorified Saviour, we may claim a common interest in his love, and be admitted to a common eternity of bliss in his bosom!

The subject, imperfectly as it has been treated, would be indeed incomplete, were I not to remark,

(1.) That *the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the foundation of every other mercy.* The trumpet of the jubilee was to sound *in the great day of the atonement.* When the priest had slain the victim, entered the Holy of Holies with its blood, and sprinkled the mercy-seat of the ark of the covenant,—thus making an offering for the sins of the people, the peal of liberty

was heard throughout the land. They who were afflicting their souls in contrition for past iniquity, and applying the blood of sprinkling by faith to themselves, were then admitted to a full participation of its joyful privileges. Would you know whence all your spiritual mercies have their rise and origin? Go to the cross. Behold the fountain of divine goodness opened in the blood of him who died upon it. Thence issues the pardon of sin; thence the love of God freely and gladly flows; thence spring forth the graces of a sanctifying Spirit; thence are poured out the rich possession, and the rich reversion of Christian life, and Christian hope; thence descend all the supplies of goodness which a child of light can need, now and in his father's kingdom. Without shedding of blood is no remission of sins, no hope of heaven. Seek them therefore, through the death of Christ; and seek them in the humility of Christian faith. While the great High Priest hath entered into the holy place, by his own blood, to make intercession for you, cast yourselves upon the merit of his death, and the power of his advocacy. Stand, each without, in fervency of prayer, and lowliness of heart, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." There listen,—nor shall ye listen long, until the trumpet of the Gospel Jubilee shall reach your hearts with the

power of an individual application, "Thy sins are forgiven thee: thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

(2.) The spiritual application of this festival to the circumstances of the Christian church, *exhibits the necessity of serving God with unreserved fidelity and devotion.* The Jubilee invested the tribes of Israel with many and valuable privileges: but it exonerated them from no duty which the law of God had imposed. The gospel makes you the freedmen of Christ: but with reservations becoming the sanctity of its character and of its author. How then, does it command you to receive the spiritual deliverance which it declares and conveys? *As free, yet not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.* The same revelation of mercy which proclaims liberty to the captives, binds you to the service of your heavenly Father by obligations the most cogent. *Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you must have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.* To this very purpose was the glorious gospel delivered. *The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men; teaching us that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.* To him then, who loves sin in the prac-

tice, or cherishes sin in the desire, the liberty of Christ, the gracious Jubilee of the gospel has hitherto been preached in vain. He only is the Lord's freeman, who in the imparted strength of his Saviour's Spirit, instead of allowing "sin to reign in his mortal body, that he should obey it in the lusts thereof," *yields himself unto God as one that is alive from the dead, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

(3.) The gracious festival of the Jubilee, a festival pre-eminently displaying the divine goodness to Israel, teaches us in terms too plain to be mistaken, the *necessity of shewing mercy to others.* The Jews were commanded, when the trumpet sounded, generously and freely to remit every man the debt which his brother owed; and to liberate his captive, at the very moment when he was imploring the pardon of his own sins by the blood of sprinkling; and when he witnessed the atonement for his own transgression. Behold, the model for your imitation! You look to the crucified Son of God, as to him who pays the ransom for your souls, and liberates you from a captivity otherwise hopeless. Remember, therefore, that the obligations of redeeming love to you, demand you to have compassion upon others. Have you exhibited your sense of this compassion by the fervour of your regard to others?

Do you know, that you have passed from death unto life, because you love the brethren, with something of that enlarged charity, which the Saviour of man exhibited towards yourselves? Ye will surely bear in mind, "that the law of the Jubilee for the release of the debtor was merely a type of that generous compassion which should animate every true Christian under the grace of the gospel."[1] If the accents of the Saviour's love have fallen upon your hearts more loudly and more effectually, than the strain of the trumpet, on the great day of the jubilee atonement, gladdened the soul of the debtor and the captive, ye will be merciful after your power; and, "as Christ hath loved you, so will ye also love one another." It is written in that gospel, whence alone you derive a hope of mercy, —and the speaker was the Son of God, in the character of the master in his parable, *Shouldst not thou also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?*

[1] Dr. Buchanan's Jubilee Sermon, p. 25.

SERMON III.

THE INVITATION GIVEN BY MOSES TO HOBAB.

NUMBERS X. 29.

And Moses said unto Hobab the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place, of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.

When a celebrated Athenian philospher[1] lay on his death-bed, he solemnly returned thanks to God, for having created him a man, rather than an irrational animal; for having made him a Grecian, instead of a barbarian; and for permitting him to be the contemporary of Socrates, the great luminary of his age and nation.

If a view of divine mercy, comparatively so confined and partial could bid the heart of this

[1] Plato.

wise heathen throb with gratitude, amidst its last earthly emotions, with what adoring thankfulness should a sincere Christian contemplate his own vast and varied heritage of mercy. To advantages social and civil, which the best ages of antiquity never knew, he adds others peculiarly arising out of the faith and hope of the gospel. He is a subject of that most blessed dispensation, which proclaims, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace and good will to men." That love to others which is the closest bond of amity and peace on earth, and the unfailing fountain of bliss in heaven, is especially taught him at the foot of the cross. He looks to that most miraculous act of compassion, by which his salvation was purchased upon Calvary, when incarnate Deity died for him, "the just for the unjust, to bring him to God." He there learns to imitate the mind of universal charity that was in Christ Jesus. The Spirit bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God; and therefore he loves every member of God's family. When he contrasts the extent of his possessions, and the magnificence of his prospects, with the bereaved and perishing condition of those who have no hope, and are without God in the world, he longs, and labours, and prays, that they also may obtain remission of sins, and an inheritance among

them that are sanctified, through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

The solicitation of Moses to his brother-in-law Hobab, displays that sense of divine goodness, and that unaffected anxiety for the best interests of others, which invariably distinguish every zealous and faithful follower of God. It is therefore, in harmony with our usual attendance in the sanctuary, whither we come to hear and bless the wonders of redeeming love; and thus to catch a spark of that compassion for others, which glowed in the Saviour's bosom towards ourselves.

With this appropriation of the subject, the scripture before us will exhibit

I. The Declaration of Moses.

II. His Invitation to Hobab.

I. Canaan was preeminently the land of promise. Four hundred and thirty years before this period it had been given to the posterity of Abraham; and they were now on their march to possess it. Well then, might their distinguished leader address Hobab in the exulting language of the text: "We are journeying unto the place, of which the Lord said, I will give it you." If reiterated assurances, confirmed by the most stupendous acts of power and faithfulness, could silence unbelief, and enable the tribes of

Israel to depend upon the integrity of the word of God, they possessed ample encouragement to pass on through the wilderness, in cheerful patient hope; nay in the full assurance of faith. The land was before them, and the veracity of God was pledged, that they should inhabit it.

We are assured, that Canaan is a type of heaven;—an emblem of that rest, pure, perfect, unbroken, and eternal, which remains for the people of God. The same voice of mercy which calls us forth from the house of bondage, the slavery of Satan, the land of darkness, and the shadow of spiritual death, addresses us in accents of unchangeable truth from the pages of the Bible; offering to invest us with the glorious reversion of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. "Father," said the Saviour, in the anticipation of his great redemption—"Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." That voice could never plead unheard in heaven. For his sake, *God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, (his promise and his oath) we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope*

set before us. If we have indeed in heart left the land of iniquity behind us, and are looking back upon it, only with that dread and abhorrence which urges us to an additional swiftness in flight, then are we interested in that covenant, ordered in all things, and sure, which pledges the veracity of a divine engagement, that our Father's good pleasure will give us the kingdom. "A promise is made us of entering into that rest." "Faithful is he who hath called us, who also will do it." *God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it, or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good.*

Vainly indeed, would the land of Canaan have been assured to Israel, unless the arm of the Lord had guided, his mercy fed, and his omnipotence defended them, in their way through the wilderness. Vainly would the joys of the kingdom above be laid before us,—vainly would the risen Redeemer be gone to prepare a place for us, were we obliged to tread the wilderness of sin alone, and find our way to the rest of heaven by our own wisdom, strength, and virtue. But he who has promised the land, has provided us with the means of reaching it, through all the dangers that beset the way of everlasting life. The word of his salvation directs those who follow its guidance with a cer-

tainty as infallible as that by which the marches of Israel were led by the pillar of the cloud and of fire. The bread from heaven is bestowed upon them day by day. "They drink by faith of the rock that follows them; and that rock is Christ." The tabernacle of God is with them; and the Shekinah of his presence rests in their camp. He who has promised eternal blessedness as the end of their pilgrimage, and an everlasting triumph as the accomplishment of their warfare, has made every needful provision for the successful termination of both. Happy are the people that are in such a case! If ours be the walk of faith and self-denial—if eternal things have so fully occupied our hearts, that the love of those mean and perishing enjoyments which earth can give, or of those grovelling cares which earth excites, cannot reign and tyrannize within us, then may we feel, that our weakness is sustained by an Almighty arm, and our languid graces cherished by the Holy Spirit; as the parched earth is refreshed by the former and the latter rain. If we are cleaving to the almighty sufficiency of his grace as our only hope, and living to his glory, with the love of Christ as the constraining impulse of duty, then are we privileged to trust, that he who hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: —then may we look to be "kept by the power of

God through faith unto salvation:"—then may we commit all our eternal interests, and all our hopes of final salvation to him who gave to St. Paul an experience, in some degree attainable by all that love and serve the Saviour in sincerity; *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from that love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

As a farther inducement to the mind of Hobab, Moses declared the blessings present and future which the Most High had pronounced upon his chosen heritage. "The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." He had blessed them, and they should be blessed. It was not enough to assert their coming triumph over the nations of Canaan, and the possession of their inheritance: but as the covenant people of his love, they were assured of his continual presence, and of the exercises of his unwearied goodness. So dear were they in his sight, so intimate their union with himself, that the ungodly seer, who afterwards vainly endeavoured to devote them to ruin, for the wages of iniquity, offered by the king of Moab, was overruled to bless them altogether. "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed, or how shall I defy

whom the Lord hath not defied? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it." They were regarded as the children of God; and no weapon formed against them prospered. Does Pharoah rage for their destruction? The Red Sea performs its office of vengeance, and overwhelms him and his armies in its depths. Does Amalek seek their overthrow? Moses prays on the mount, Israel contends in the valley, aud Amalek is discomfited. Their feet swell not, their raiment grows not old, there is not one feeble person among their tribes, while they adhere to the Lord, and follow him, like children of obedience. Heaven furnishes them with food; and the rock with water. All their pilgrimage is miracle, all their experience mercy. The Lord hath spoken good concerning them. Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!

And what hath God said of those, whom the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made free from the law of sin and death? What is their experience of present mercy? what their supports and comforts along the path that leads to the inheritance of the saints in light? My brethren, *all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth unto them that keep his covenant and*

his testimonies. They that love the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good. Their inventory of mercy includes the stores of Providence, and the exhaustless riches of the kingdom of grace. *All things are your's, whether of the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* If, in the purity and sincerity of Christian devotedness, any of you have resolved not to glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be crucified upon it to the world, to become the obedient servants of the Most High—to make his love your present portion, and his promises the resting-place of your soul's hope. If, feeling that you are not your own, you desire to glorify him in your body and in your spirit, which are his, let me ask,—and I do it without fear of an unsatisfactory answer, whether you cannot give in your testimony to the truth of the declaration, that the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel? If, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, ye be not "of them who draw back into perdition; but of them who believe, to the saving of the soul," it shall be well with you; well in life, well in death, well in eternity; *for surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God.* Can it be otherwise, consistently with the character

of your Heavenly Father, and the nature of the promises? Is not that man happy, who hath a union with his Redeemer, and who, in virtue of that union, hath a filial interest and participation in that God who is the only felicity of his creatures? Is he not happy, for whom the tribunal of avenging justice is changed into a throne of grace, to which he hath access through the intercession of his eternal High Priest? who beholds justice and mercy seated upon that throne, in perfect harmony, and waiting to embrace him? Is he not happy, whose person and services are accepted, imperfect as they are; for whom a full propitiation has been made; for whom a resistless advocate pleads? Is he not happy, who, being a believer, and a servant, and a son, has no just cause of dread for the solemnities and verdict of that impartial day, when vengeance will be taken only "upon those that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Is he not happy, for whom the veil of the temple is rent, that he may view the Holy of Holies, and the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat of divine reconciliation within it; who has a prospect of heaven while he lives, and an entrance into heaven when he dies[1]? Concerning that man it may,

[1] Charnock's Works, Vol. II. pp. 448, 449.

indeed, be said, that the Lord has spoken good; and, as the impregnable refuge of his hope, it may be added, *The word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God.*

II. With declarations such as these, to the truth of which every individual among the multitudes of Israel was a competent and undeniable witness, we can easily understand how the affectionate solicitude of Moses should have urged the INVITATION, with which he intreated Hobab to partake the privileges of this favoured people. *Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.* Christianity is the religion of love; and it is hardly more possible that a follower of Jesus Christ, an humble, faithful disciple of his law, who has experienced his mercy, imbibed his spirit, and been transformed into his likeness, should be a selfish independent member of his Saviour's mystical body, and wish to pass to heaven alone, than it would be possible that his master and exemplar should desire to surrender all the travail of his soul, and live through the ages of glory unattended by those whom he became incarnate, and suffered to save. O, if a Pharisee could compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and by the transformation to make him tenfold more a child of hell, shall Christian love be a principle less powerful, or the effort to save a soul from

death, and to cover a multitude of sins, be either never made at all, or made so feebly, as to mock the deep want of a perishing spirit, and utterly to disparage and dishonour the mighty salvation provided for it in the gospel? If any of you, in the experience of a saving change, produced by the renewal of the Holy Spirit, can say to those around, *Come hither, and I will tell you what God hath done for my soul,* I am persuaded, that every feeling of reverence to him, zeal for his glory, gratitude for the unsearchable riches of his son's love, and sympathy for the spiritual wants of those whom you address, must urge you to add, *O, taste and see, that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

Moses was the friend of the Most High, and richly gifted with the communications of his love. Experience, therefore, gave warrant to the solicitude with which he cried to Hobab, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." Barnabas was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith. And what was his advice to those of the church of Antioch, whom he visited? "When he had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and exhorted them that, with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord." If man ever felt the power and the blessedness of religion, amidst all its

trials, that man was St. Paul: and what was the desire of his heart for Agrippa, and those before whom he stood for judgment? "I would to God, that not only thou, but all who hear me this day, were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds." "The spirit and the bride say, Come; and whosoever heareth their voice will say, Come." Christian love is like the widow's oil, that first filled all the vessels of her own house, and then those of her friends and neighbours. The language of those who have known the value of the good part which they have chosen, is that of believers in the ancient church. *Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways; and we will walk in his paths. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.* The enlarged affection of such an experimental acquaintance with religion points out to all around the excellences of the gospel, and the inestimable value of its author. It delights to exhibit him in the mount to teach, on the cross to atone, in heaven to intercede, in judgment to acquit, in eternity to glorify. And then adds, with something of that exultation which filled the mind of the mystical bride, *this is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!*

"Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." Such is the invitation of love from those who believe and obey the gospel, to those who have not yet obtained, because they have not sought, an interest in its mercies. As though they should say, "Hasten to seek that faith, by which you and we must be equally united to the Saviour, and to the Father of Lights;" and depend upon our good offices, willingly and gladly exhibited, to shew you the beauty of holiness, the privileges of Christians, the grandeur of their hopes, the dignity of their service, the glory of their destiny. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* Mark also the generosity of feeling, the utter absence of all desire for superiority in Christian privilege and reward, that is attained by him within whose heart "the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost given unto him." Mark the true liberality of him, who knows "that he hath passed from death unto life, because he loves the brethren." Moses has used his language; and none more fitting or more forcible, can be devised, to express the feeling of a Christian's mind, and the readiness of a Christian's love. "It shall be, if thou go with us; yea it shall be, that what

goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." Israel possessed no distinction from which Hobab, though a Midianite, should be excluded. Every mercy by the way, and every benefit which the possession of Canaan might afford, was to be freely imparted to him. Nor is there a blessing which the disciples of Christ possess, a hope they form, an enjoyment they cherish, which they are not anxious to communicate to others. Freely they have received, freely would they give. Their heart's desire, and prayer, and effort for others is, that they may be saved. Are they themselves justified from the condemnation of sin, and freed from its dread penalty, by having taken refuge in Christ Jesus, as Noah within the appointed sanctuary of the ark? They long that all around may share the same forgiveness. Are they the divine workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus, unto good works? They are anxious to bring others to the knowledge of the same transforming energy. Have they a present interest in the love of the Eternal Trinity? They would lead their friends and neighbours, and all mankind, within the comprehensive embrace of the same mercy. Have they a hope full of immortality? They would gladly know, that every child of Adam were enabled, like themselves, "to re-

joice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." They have some participation in that universal charity which filled the heart of the beloved John, when he cried, "I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk in the truth," or that of the apostle of the gentiles, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." If there be a joy, for which more than another they are anxious on this side the world of joy, it is, that all whom their influence, example, or exertion, can possibly reach, may be won by the power of the Holy Spirit, to cast in their lot with the sincere and holy members of the church, as they pass along that highway of faith and virtue, that terminates in the felicities of the everlasting city, and say, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.*

I. Are we professedly journeying to the place, of which God hath said, I will give it you: and hath the Lord spoken good concerning Israel? Is heaven the declared goal of our desires? and do we, indeed, acknowledge, that they only are blessed, who by faith are interested in the covenant, and soldiers of the camp of God? *Judge then with what unwearied zeal we should press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* They who confess such things acknowledge plainly that they seek a country. Can you then, in-

deed say, We are journeying? Have ye truly turned your backs upon Egypt? and are ye enquiring the way to Zion with your faces thitherward? Have ye cast yourselves upon divine protection and support, as you pass the wilderness? Are ye looking towards the appointed guide for direction; and to the hand of God for such mercies as his wisdom sees fit to provide? Act consistently with this high and honourable profession. *Use all diligence to make your calling and election sure.* Let it be seen that your hearts are, indeed, weaned from the land which, in name and confession, ye have quitted, no more to return, and be entangled and enslaved by the chains of its bondage. "If ye be risen with Christ" from the death of sin—from that prostration of soul, which bows it beneath the love of earthly seductions, "seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." *Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.* Would it have been answerable to the engagements and prospects of the Israelites, that they should return to Egypt, or loiter in the wilderness, and encamp longer than was needful amidst its wastes and barrenness, when the glory of all lands was before them? Such a procedure would have been mournfully inconsistent with their duty. And shall ye, whose acknowledged principle

and impulse is, the demand of mercy, the distinction of your service, and the glory of your reward, linger on the way in heartless listlessness? *Rather, lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset you; and run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus.* Review your privileges and prospects, in order that a principle of holy love, whose tendency is invariably heavenward, may be awakened or invigorated within you. The vessel may leave the port with a favouring wind, and her prow may be directed towards the haven where the mariners would be: but if her course be not governed according to the mysterious influence of the magnet, she will be the sport of every wind and current that may assail her. Love and hope must quicken you in the way of God's commandments. They will enable you to pass through the difficulties of the wilderness, without fainting. They will make duty pleasant, and self-denial easy through every part of the pilgrimage that may be yet before you.

II. Is it a Christian's duty to invite others to partake his happiness, and to say with Moses, "Come with us, and we will do you good?" *Reflect then with what zeal, disinterestedness, and self-denial, common consistency in religion demands you to labour for the spiritual welfare*

of your fellow sinners. While ye aim to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things, aim also to have companions in the way to heaven. Especially, aim to open the riches of that gospel which may make the most ignorant wise unto salvation. Have ye the record of the faithful and true witness, that not even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple shall be forgotten by him? Are ye commanded to minister to all the wants of the body? And shall ye suppose God unmindful of, or indifferent to that higher and more momentous labour of love which aims to enlarge the gracious dominion of the Son of God, and the mild triumph of the cross, over the principles of unbelief and sin within the minds of fallen men? Spiritual benevolence exceeds temporal liberality, in its very nature. The former is only a confined exercise of *love*; the latter a manifestation of *faith* and *love*. In the former case, we look for an immediate result; in the latter, we cast our bread upon the waters, hoping to find it after many days; or, at least, to behold some blessed result, in the full disclosures of eternal judgment. O then, by every method which Christian compassion can devise, endeavour to spread the glad tidings of that invitation, which God permits you to make; and which the course of his wise and wondrous providence is

carrying by so many channels to the four winds of heaven. "Come with us and we will do you good." I know not, indeed, how a Christian can be indifferent to the spiritual want and destitution of a world that lieth in wickedness: or omit any method of bringing, even one soul to Christ; and yet be prepared to answer that startling question, "Where is thy brother? and whence is it, that while thou hadst the gospel, and mightest have been instrumental in making it the power of God to his salvation, thou hast stood by in cold abstraction, and cried, Am I my brother's keeper?" I do indeed fully comprehend, that well-intentioned Christians may differ upon the most eligible and consistent mode of advancing the knowledge of religion, the faith of Christ crucified, the interests of true morality, and the triumphs of the gospel. But, if it be imperative upon every one who has the cross and hope of the Son of God, as the guiding star of his own Spirit to extend the blessings of redemption, and the supply of temporal want to those who are living in poverty, ignorance, and sin, the only question which I can imagine proper to be asked, is simply, in what manner this work of mercy can be done, in most conscientious accord with every man's view of religion, and of his obligations to that portion of the Redeemer's church, with which,

among its various denominations the inquirer is united. The signs of the times are full of encouragement to all the desires of Christian mercy. Efforts, hitherto unparalleled, are now made to spread the knowledge of religion, at home and abroad; and to hasten that period which shines so brightly in the anticipations of Christian hope, when every idol that hath usurped the place of God shall be broken in pieces before the cross;—when from the East, and from the West, from the North and from the South, shall be heard that song of adoring rapture, *Hallelujah! for the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ!* That glorious dominion is surely on its increase. The angel is "flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel, to preach to them of every nation and country, and tongue, and language, and people." It is the duty of all who are themselves animated by its hopes, to aid the measures which may advance that universal jubilee, when man, in every climate of his habitation, and every circumstance of his being, shall hear the glad sound which proclaims his deliverance from the slavery and death of sin, to become the freedman of Christ, and the heir of eternal life in heaven. Let no one shrink from taking his part in this labour of love whether public or private, according to the ability

which God giveth. Let no one say, in an excessive humility most dishonourable to his heavenly Father, that he can do nothing to lead others in the way of life. That little captive maid, whom the Syrians brought out of the land of Israel, was the honoured, although the humble instrument of inducing Naaman to wash in those waters of Jordan which cleansed the leprosy of his body, and of becoming the subject of that converting mercy, which removed the more dangerous leprosy of sin from his soul. She was probably acquainted with the God of Israel: she acted in faith; and her labour was not in vain in the Lord. Avoid ye, the unbelief or doubt of Gideon, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold my family is poor in Manasseh; and I am the least in my father's house." Stand upon your watch to be spiritually useful to others; and leave the success, in faith, to Him who alone giveth the increase. Above all, endeavour, each of you to persuade others by the unequivocal testimony of a holy life, to admire the influence of religion, and the beauty of holiness. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

SERMON IV.

THE SUPPLY OF QUAILS, ATTENDED WITH THE WRATH OF GOD AGAINST THE DISCONTENT OF ISRAEL.

NUMBERS XI. 31—33.

And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp. And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.

OUR blessed Redeemer gave an undeniable proof of his acquaintance with the human heart, when he said, "If any man will come after me,

let him deny himself." The desires of an unrenewed mind are so many, and so clamorous, and the indulgences in which it delights, so decidedly at enmity with the will of God, and the salutary influence of his Spirit upon the heart, that he, in whom the love of self-gratification lives and reigns, cannot in sincerity take up his cross and follow Christ. Never yet did any one fully embrace the gospel, who did not desire to deny his own wisdom, as an empty lamp; his own will, as a dangerous guide; his own imagination, as an erroneous rule; his own affections, as deceitful counsellors; and his own gratification, as an unworthy end. As the chosen tribes, in their subsequent history would have slain every one who opposed the royalty of Saul, so will a sincere Christian aim to subdue every opposition to the spiritual dominion of his Redeemer, until that sufficiency which an Almighty Spirit can alone communicate, prompts and enables him to say, *Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

The history of the tribes of Israel, through every part of their miraculous and mystical journey from Egypt to Canaan exhibits the dreadful influence of that proneness to self-indulgence, that sordid and degrading sensuality, which made them more anxious to obtain meat

for their lust, than to secure the favour of God, and the possession of the promised land.

But these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. It is alike the wisdom and the happiness of a reasonable man, to derive caution and safety from the transgressions of others; and from the judgments with which they have been visited by the wrath of heaven. A memorable instance of both is now before us. May that Eternal Spirit, who penned the record for our admonition, write it upon our hearts! that avoiding the inordinate desires of God's ancient people for undue indulgence, we may live, as contented grateful pensioners upon that measure of divine bounty which infinite wisdom has allotted us; and say with him, who, having nothing, possessed all things in the Saviour, *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* With such holy desire in the application of this instructive Scripture, we should contemplate—

I. THE DISCONTENT OF THE ISRAELITES.

II. THE INFIDELITY OF MOSES.

III. THE RIGHTEOUS CONDUCT OF GOD.

I. It would be difficult to imagine any thing within the extended circle of protection and supply, which had not liberally been given to

the children of Israel. They could not suffer hunger, for manna fell daily upon them from the firmament. They could not faint with thirst, for the waters of the smitten rock followed them through the wilderness. They could not err from the right way, for the flaming and cloudy pillar led their march. They had every thing which contented minds could desire, not only in sufficiency to use, but in abundance to enjoy. Where then lay the cause of murmuring and discontent? Even in their own ill-regulated, and inordinate desires, upon which every act and exercise of mercy fell, like oil upon the flame, to make them burn with more unhallowed fierceness. The children of Israel wept, and said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all, beside this manna before our eyes." Was this really their experience? Did the bread which descended from heaven mock their appetite, or leave them weak and unsustained? Far otherwise. While they ate it, and were contented, there was not one feeble person among their tribes. But, goaded by sinful affections, they loathed the food which God bestowed, and tempted him in their heart, by asking meat for

their lust. If the catalogue of provisions which they had left behind in the land of their bondage, and to which they now recurred with disgraceful regret, had been as luxurious and costly, as it was sordid and common, they should willingly and gladly have counted all but loss, for the blessings to which they had already attained; and for those future mercies, which lay in magnificent prospect before their eyes. In better days, "their more enlightened descendants took joyfully even the spoiling of their goods; knowing that they had in heaven a better, and an enduring substance." Mark then, how infallibly the desire of carnal good and present gratification produces a perverted, mischievous, and guilty neglect, or scorn of present mercies! He who openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness, may provide for us with bounties which unerring wisdom, not less than unfathomable love, selects and regulates: but an undiscerning and rebellious man will loathe alike the manner and the measure of divine goodness. Utterly perverting the prayer which an enlightened heart would offer, he will exclaim, in the selfish desire of forbidden good, "Not *thy* will, but *mine* be done." The mother of mankind might surely have remained contented with the universal range of Paradise, and with the free permission to eat of the fruit of all the

trees in the garden, one alone excepted. But, because she was tempted by Satan, and saw "that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise," she coveted its possession. She therefore broke through the only restraint which God had imposed, so as to bring sin and death upon herself, and all her posterity. If the manna from heaven feed us with the bread of life,—if the waters of a sanctifying Spirit gush forth to refresh and purify us,—if the word and teaching of God be directing us through the wilderness, towards the rest that lies beyond it,—shall we not be contented with our allotment of bodily and earthly good; even if it be not that which sense and sight most desire? Shall we not endeavour to hush every rising murmur, into the deep tranquillity of thankful submission, by the blessed assurance, *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?* Shall we mingle the bitterness of gall and wormwood with the cup of our mercies, until we loathe it, because sovereign dominion, and unsearchable knowledge do not see good to bestow exactly in the manner which we see good to demand? Was it to the praise, or the reproach of Ahab's wisdom, that while he was seated on the throne of Israel, he was inconsolably wretched, because

he could not obtain the little vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite? Was Haman to be envied, when, amidst all the unbounded splendours of his station beside the throne of Persia, his happiness depended upon the homage which a despised Israelite withheld? *All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's gate.* Few symptoms of a declining, or rebellious state of heart are more unequivocal, or more mournful, than an eager unsatisfied desire of worldly good, beyond the measure in which God has seen fit to impart it. He who walks in the view and brightness of those mercies, which the promises of the Bible reflect from the love of the Saviour to his soul, and maintains by faith a communion with the secret, though satisfying glories of the invisible world, will have no eye of love for any thing beneath them as his supreme good? If a Christian feel himself less than the least of all God's mercies, he will thankfully receive those which are given; and acquiesce in the love and justice with which others are withheld. If, especially, he be made a partaker of that eternal life which consists in knowing, obeying, and enjoying Christ, the earthly manna will abundantly suffice him. He will receive it with gladness and gratitude: and instead of regretting imaginary privations, will raise a monument of thankfulness in his heart

to God; and say, *Hitherto the Lord hath helped me;* and hereafter, *my God shall supply all my need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. He is my shepherd, I shall not want.* "Is Christ mine?" saith the inimitable Bishop Hall,[1] "how then can I fail of all contentment? How can he want light who dwells in the sun? What can we wish which he will not provide? Do we need provision by the way to heaven? His flesh is meat indeed; and his blood is drink indeed. Need we medicine? He is the tree of life. Need we safety and protection? He truly is our strength and our salvation. Would we have direction? He is the way, and the truth, and the life. Would we obtain all real mercies? They are found in him who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Whether God shall give or deny blessings of minor interest may be safely left with himself. The hearts of the men of Israel were wedded to present gratification. Their grovelling views were rarely raised to higher and nobler objects of attainment and possession. Their desire, equally perverse and short-sighted, despised the compassion, and limited the power of the Most High. "Behold, he smote the rock that the

[1] Works viii. 31.

waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can he give bread also, and provide flesh for his people?" This spirit of ungrateful and daring rebellion cleaves too closely to us all. "God hath delivered us from the house of bondage; and supported us in the wilderness. Jesus Christ is present with the church; and his miracles of love and mercy are continually before our eyes in the course of providence, in the word, and the sacraments of redemption. Yet how many still provoke and tempt the Most High! How many ask provision for their lust, when their necessities are satisfied: and, after every past and recorded experience of divine goodness, murmur and grudge, if they be not indulged in those cravings of a carnal mind, which can be granted only upon terms eternally to be lamented?"[1] Discontent at any dispensation of heaven, ill becomes him whom God hath begotten to a glorious inheritance and reversion. The grace which has effected the wondrous change may indeed contradict the desires of a sinful nature, but will invariably be found to advance the new and spiritual interests of the child of God. It will therefore, be equally his wisdom, his duty, and his happiness, not to pant like David for a good beyond his reach. "O,

[1] Bishop Horne on Psalm xx. verse 20.

that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate?" but to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: in the full assurance of faith, that all other things shall be added unto him.

II. If there be any page in the history of mankind which shews the cares and inquietudes invariably attendant upon exalted rank, it is that which records the eventful life of Moses. An authority more extensive in its character, and confirmed by more weighty, or more awful sanctions, than that which he exercised over the tribes of Israel, could hardly be imagined. Yet did alarm, vexation, trouble, and sin arise continually, from the honourable and responsible office in which he stood, as the appointed leader of the armies and heritage of God. A most instructive example of their provocation, and of HIS DISTRUST, is set forth in the chapter before us; and demands our next consideration. "Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent; and he said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant; and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all the people upon me? Have I conceived all this people; have I begotten them; that thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father

beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people; for it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me I pray thee, and let me not see my wretchedness?" Instead of using a holy boldness of remonstrance with the rebellious camp, and pouring the fervour of intercessory prayer into the ear of God, as formerly, we find him querulous and timid, alike fearful of Israel, and distrustful of Jehovah. Surely while he fed the people with a faithful and true heart, and occupied his post of duty, as their prince and leader, he had no reason to doubt the continuance of his favour with heaven; or to dread, lest the presence and power of God should be withdrawn. He almost seems to think the armies of Israel harshly dealt with, because their unhallowed desire was not gratified: and that their very rebellion was extenuated, if it could not be excused. The sin of Israel was ground indeed for deep regret and humiliation—none for murmuring, none for infidelity, none for taking part with the ungrateful tribes against him who had delivered and sustained them. The whole transaction indeed evidently exhibits a reality of zeal for the divine

glory, and the welfare of the people: but not a chastened zeal, according to knowledge and submission. His wish for death is in sad harmony with the rest of this unbelieving, though affectionate complaint. Like Moses in the desert, Jonah under the withered gourd, or Elijah in the wilderness near Beersheba, men seldom wish that they may die, except when their minds are in that state of guilty agitation, distrust of God, dereliction of duty, or timid faintness, which would make the attainment of their request a tremendous evil. Our desire of death rarely arises from a willingness to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: too generally, alas, from weariness and fear in the hour of affliction. We do not walk by faith:—the appointed trial comes; we are immediately cast down, and cry with the chastened, but unthinking patriarch, *All these things are against me.*

Even after the Most High had pledged his word, that flesh should be sent in miraculous profusion, Moses distrusted his promise. "The people among whom I am are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them; or shall all the fishes of the sea be gathered together to suffice them?" Thus feeble man decides upon the divine ability,

by his own scanty line and measure. Thus the apostles, as they contrasted their own little store with the mighty multitude whom Jesus commanded them to feed, exclaimed, "Two hundred penny-worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" They forget the Almighty Saviour who could feed the thousands whom his hand had made. While we are called upon to behold and pity these instances of imperfect faith, this infirmity of spirit in those upon whom the correcting and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit most largely rested, we should learn the double lesson—to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; expecting perfection in God alone: and to rely, with a more implicit confidence, upon the promises of his word, the fidelity of his character, and the omnipotence of his arm. Jesus said, as he stood by the grave of Lazarus, "Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? And when he had thus spoken he cried

with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth: and he that was dead came forth."

III. The Judge of all the earth will assuredly do right, as THE CONDUCT OF GOD in the instance before us will abundantly prove.

(1.) *He pardoned Moses:* because, although the prophet spake unadvisedly with his lips, yet his heart was filled with an ardent desire for the divine glory, and a sincere affection for the people committed to his charge. We hear no language of rebuke or anger from the Lord, when Moses uttered the unrestrained and immoderate feeling of his heart. And when faith could not maintain its ground against unbelief, after the promise of supply was given, the Most High vouchsafed simply to appeal to that which should happen, as the removal and condemnation of his servant's infidelity. "The Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now, whether my word shall come to pass or not." Thus graciously does our compassionate Father condescend to the infirmity of human nature; excuse the suggestions of involuntary doubt; and give stability to the exercise of future faith, by the sure record of experience. And certainly, when the confidence which a Christian ought to maintain in the word and promise of God, is shaken and inter-

rupted, by the intrusion of unbelieving fear, it is a mild and merciful rebuke, which yet should deeply abase him in the sight of heaven and in his own eyes, that his kind and compassionate Father not only pities his feebleness, but, "with the temptation, also makes a way for him to escape, that he may be able to bear it."

(2.) *Not thus however, did the insulted majesty of Jehovah bear with the obdurate rebellion of his ungrateful people.* They had their desire. The quails fell around the camp, in profusion beyond imagination miraculous. They saw their unholy wishes fulfilled. They had required, and they now possessed, meat for their lust, in unstinted abundance: and each man, as he congratulated himself on the success of his opposition to the usual order of providence for his daily supply, might be disposed to say, "Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry." But the pleasures of sin are but for a season. "While the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people; and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague." The joy was brief, the retribution terrible. They did eat indeed, and were well filled: "for he gave them their own desire." What a judgment of wrath is here! They coveted that which it consisted not with the purposes of heaven to com-

municate, or with their own welfare to receive; and the request of their lips is given them in vengeance. O, if there be any here seeking sensual and forbidden indulgences with an insatiable cupidity, and murmuring against heaven because they are not bestowed, let them tremble, lest that prohibition and salutary restraint which alone stands between them and the mischievous affection which exercises its mastery over them should be withdrawn; and the word should go forth in merited judgment, *Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt.*

The very satiety of the supply would soon have made the quails loathsome to the senses and palates of the men of Israel: even as every sinful enjoyment serves only to mock its possessor with the mere shadow and semblance of the anticipated delight. But vengeance outran even the quick advance of this disgust. And what was the satisfaction which the quails so passionately sought produced, when the commissioned plague did its dreadful office upon them, and smote them in the midst of their guilty revel? They who ate the manna contentedly and gratefully, lived and were happy: but the prosperity of those who loathed it, destroyed them. It is true, that punishment may not immediately be yoked to sin,—as the lightning flash is coupled with the thunder: but the connexion is never

broken,—the chain that binds them to each other can never be unclosed. Repentance will come at last. The mocked and self-deluded offender who cleaves to his transgression, receives it as his portion, and honours it as his god, will be fearfully undeceived, when death or judgment shall pour the light of truth upon his soul, and scatter the delusions by which it hath been misled to make eternal shipwreck of every hope. Look backward, my brethren, and consult the eventful histories of years now passed, and living only in your recollection. How many thoughtless, wilful transgressors can you remember, on whom the plague fell, because they preferred the gratification of their own evil desires to holy moderation and self-denial; and who have gone down with an awful and untimely speed to Kibroth-Hattaavah, the graves of lust? The terrified Israelites gladly struck their tents, and journeyed from this scene of death. Imitate their conduct. Be warned by your experience of sin which others have committed, and the judgments they have endured in the body; and by your assurance of the woes which shall eternally be inflicted upon impenitent offenders, in body and soul, in the recompence of the eternal day. *Thou, O man of God, flee these things. Escape for thy life.* Little will the objects of sensual delight avail in the extremity of that

unspeakably awful moment, which places the transgressor before the bar of heaven, to abide the sentence of a despised and insulted God, without a Saviour, without an intercessor, without any other companion, than the book of remembrance in which his offences are registered. *Be careful for nothing* beyond what your heavenly Father sees fit to impart: *but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God: and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through, Christ Jesus.*

Hear then, the conclusion of the whole matter. If we be truly wise, we shall rejoice to submit our own will and wants, to that unerring knowledge, and boundless love, which unite to form the impelling principle of every dealing and measure of God towards us. Have we heretofore thought that dealing harsh and unkind; and required meat, when our Father sent us only manna? O, let us compare his gifts with our returns—his bestowment with our gratitude; and be amazed, that any provision still remains, and is imparted to our demerit and ingratitude. Have we fled from Egypt? Are we treading the mazes of the wilderness heavenward? And do we sometimes feel the rising of a temptation to wish for more than we pos-

sess? Let us not faint or be discouraged. We have not yet received the inheritance. It lies before us, beaming with a glory which shall increasingly and eternally irradiate it: and in the mean time God will make the best possible provision for us by the way. In our Father's house, whither we are journeying, there is bread enough and to spare. That ground is often most abundant in mineral wealth, which appears most barren on the surface:—as the poor in this world's good, are often rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. And surely, the possession of spiritual mercies, and the prospect of everlasting felicity, may well reconcile us to some present privations. "I will not care," said an eminent prelate,[1] "what I have, whether much or little. If little, my account shall be less; if more, I shall do the more good, and receive the more glory." There is one secret which Christian wisdom will always aim to discover. If the condition cannot be raised and improved to the wish; the wish should be subdued to meet and harmonize with the condition. The most effectual mode of attaining this blessed unity between our state and our desires, is to be heavenly minded; to look not at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but at the things

[1] Bishop Hall's Works, Vol. vi. p. 8.

which are not seen, which are eternal. The prudence and salutary caution of a renewed and sanctified spirit will always remember, that a state of great prosperity, is, in its very nature, unfriendly to the exercises of those graces which manifest the life and power of God within us. The full moon alone is eclipsed. Even so the graces of a Christian are dimned, darkened, and endangered, by the fulness of present good: and both the planet and the soul suffer their privation from the same cause,—the interposition of the earth between the former and the natural sun; between the latter and the Sun of righteousness. There is only one infallible rule for the attainment of present content, and the gratification of every wish. *Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

SERMON V.

THE REPORT OF THE SPIES, AFTER THEIR RETURN FROM SEARCHING OUT THE LAND OF PROMISE.

NUMBERS XIII. 25.

They returned from searching of the land after forty days.

THE beginning of any line of conduct usually enables an attentive observer to form a just anticipation of the manner in which it will be pursued, and of the issue in which it will terminate. If the first steps be simple and right, the progress will commonly be unexceptionable, and the end prosperous. If, on the other hand, the commencement be unhallowed, the subsequent measures will probably be equally or increasingly unjustifiable, and the end will be productive of disappointment and sorrow. The march of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan verifies this remarks. They commenced their miraculous journey with discontent, rebellion, and unbelief, which the future stages of their progress called

forth in still greater malignity; until the result was their destruction. The commission of the spies to search out, and report upon the character of the promised land, was a link in this mournful process. The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, "Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel." Did the command then, proceed originally from God? Quite the contrary. It was given in judicial acquiescence with their infidelity and ingratitude. "Behold," said Moses, (while reviewing this transaction) "the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee; go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged. And ye came near, every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again, by what way we must go up, and into what cities we must come."[1] So artfully were their guilty motives concealed, that the saying pleased the unsuspicious mind of Moses well. That injured God however, who knoweth the very secrets of the heart, gave them their wish, and afterwards displayed his wrath by a terrible judgment. They had become wise in their own conceit; their foolish heart was darkened;

[1] Deut. i. 21, 22.

and they awoke from their sad delusion, only to see and bewail too late the folly that preferred the blind guidance of their own devices, to the direction of God, the fidelity of his promise, and the omnipotence of his out-stretched arm.

A voice of warning is meant to reach our conscience from this page in the book of Jewish history. The apostle has made an express appropriation of all these circumstances to the instruction of the Christian church[1]. Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, *To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, so, take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.* The history included in Numb. xiii. xiv. and thus referred to ourselves, by the unerring authority of inspiration, may be considered under three distinct heads,

I. The Conduct of the Unfaithful Spies.

II. The Conduct of Caleb and Joshua.

III. The Conduct of the Guilty Multitude.

I. The persons charged with this important office of searching out the land, were not men chosen from the dregs of the people, or whose ignorance might incapacitate them for fulfiling

[1] 1 Cor. x. 11.

their duty; but rulers among the tribes of their fathers, from whom a judicious and diligent inquiry, and an accurate report might be expected. Their commission was very clearly defined. "See the land, what it is, and the people that dwell therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many, and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad, and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents or strong holds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean; whether there be wood thereon or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land." They accomplished their mission in safety, for the guardian hand of God was their defence. They passed through the land, from Kadesh-Barnea, on the south, to Beth-Rehob, in its northern border; and, coming to the brook Eshcol on their return, "they cut down from thence a branch, with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and the figs."

The word of God had already declared Canaan to be the glory of all lands, a land flowing with milk and honey; where every thing abounded that was pleasant for the sight, and good for food. But the multitude of Israel had now an evidence from twelve of their own number, that the word of the Lord in the mouth of Moses

was truth. The spies exhibited the grapes of Eshcol, of a size and beauty well calculated to excite a universal expression of desire to possess the land where they grew. They gave a testimony in its favour, suggested by the observation and experience of their own senses, that every declaration concerning it fell short of the reality. They said to Moses, before all the congregation of the children of Israel. "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it."

Thus far nothing in their conduct appears to deserve blame or suspicion. But, like their brethren of the camp, they walked by sight, and not by faith. They were carnal, timid spirits, who clung to present ease and indulgence; shrinking, with dislike and terror, from a combat with the warlike inhabitants who dwelt in the mountains and cities of Canaan. In vain, then, had they seen, that it was "a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that sprang out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive and honey, a land whereon they should eat bread without scarceness, nor lack any thing in it; a land whose stones were iron, and out of whose hills they might dig brass." All its apparent and pro-

mised beauty was obscured by abject fear of the approaching contest for its possession. "The people be strong that dwell in the land; and the cities are walled, and very great; and moreover, we saw the children of Anak there. Nay, when Caleb, with a holy confidence, becoming the faith and valour of a soldier of God, would have aroused them and their hearers, to a spirit more worthy of their hopes, they refused to listen. They said, "We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we; and they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched, unto the children of Israel, saying, the land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." A pestilence, especially sent by God, was probably at this moment thinning the ranks of their enemies, in order to make the survivors an easier prey to the swords of Israel. Yet this visitation they seem perversely to have represented as the deadly consequence of a noxious climate. "There," add these terrified messengers, "we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were, in our own sight, as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

Such searchers of Canaan are ever found within the camp of God, and the church of Christ.

They have professed religion. They have voluntarily gone forth to examine for themselves, and to report to their brethren, whether all the things that are spoken in the Bible, echoed by ministers, and confirmed by experience, concerning the Zion that is above, be true, indeed. The farther they proceed, the more surely do they learn what the Queen of Sheba knew, when she became an eye-witness of the glory of Solomon, that the half of it was not described. They behold the kingdom of heaven, visited by the refreshing and fertilizing waters of God's Holy Spirit, bearing in all its luxuriance the tree of life, even the rich mercies of the Son of God, filled with peace, and hope, and joy, and every other provision which a converted and sanctified heart can want or wish, in present pilgrimage, and everlasting possession. All this they are compelled to acknowledge before their brethren. They are obliged to give a testimony to the excellence of the kingdom of heaven, whether here, in its means of grace, or hereafter in its consummated hope of glory, similar to that which Balaam was compelled to utter concerning the consecrated camp of God, that lay in plenty and security upon the plains of Moab. Nay, they have, in some degree, tasted the word of God, and the heavenly gift. They have experienced some-

thing of the sweetness, beauty, and refreshment, furnished by the fruits of which they have gathered—it may be, a cluster, as a specimen. Whence then, it will be asked, arises the evil report which they still bring of the character of religion? They would not revile, malign, or undervalue it, did not a cowardly timidity, arising from a love of ease and self-indulgence, invest their spiritual enemies with proportions as gigantic as their own terrors. They are unwilling to go forth unto the battle, with the Lord, against the mighty. A course of strict and severe self-mortification must be commenced and continued. Sins which do most easily beset them, must be renounced. Carnal indulgence, dear as the right eye, apparently necessary as the right hand, must be renounced. Pride must be abased, self-righteousness must do homage before the cross. The prodigal must return to his father, in unconcealed shame and wretchedness. The moralist, convinced of guilt by the purity of the divine law, must flee from the quicksand that would ingulph him, if he should persist in resting his hope toward heaven upon it. Even he must speed his better way to the atonement of Calvary, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* Thus discouraged by the apparent difficulties before him, bound in the fetters of worldly

love, and shrinking from an unremitted warfare with his temptations and sins, he resolves to have his portion below. He turns back, like the faithless disciples, and walks no more with Jesus. Some report, however, must be made to others, which may account for this desertion; and therefore, he traduces the blessings, and magnifies the hardships of religion. Believing it necessary to vindicate his own consistency, he gives a testimony concerning the privileges, duties, hopes, and trials of the gospel, which can serve no other purpose, than to dishonour its eternal Author, and to impede the salvation of his brethren. Beware, my dear friends, of the dreadful error of the faithless spies. Look to its unhappy consequences, before ye desert the lists of that combat where the Lord Jesus Christ himself hath placed you. *Be not of those who draw back unto perdition; but of them who believe, to the saving of the soul.*

II. "As there is no society free from some corruption, so it is hard, if in a community of men there be not some faithfulness." *Such fidelity was exhibited by Joshua and Caleb,* men of another spirit—men who followed the Lord fully and undauntedly. Their example stands in bright and honourable contrast with the exaggerated terror, and injurious report of their unworthy colleagues. Most promptly did they

contradict the statement made by the other ten; and endeavour to prevent the baneful effect which it was calculated to produce upon the minds of the men of Israel. Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Mark, then, my brethren, the fearless confidence with which one who has devoted himself in simplicity to God, speaks of his past experience in religion, and of his hope, that he, and all his brethren of the camp, may go forth to war in the strength of God. The language of the ten is that of despondency. The language of Caleb and his fellow-soldier, for whom also he seems to speak, breathes nothing but the expectation of success, and the full assurance of victory. The Israelites do not hear him say, Let us go up and *contend* for the land which lies before us, in all its beauty and fertility; but let us go up and *possess* it. A brightness so great rests upon the triumph, a glory so transcendent gilds the reward, that he seems to overlook the difficulties of winning the country by the sword from its possessors; and to consider the advance of the congregation, as a march to certain triumph.

It is also generally supposed, that as only Caleb and Joshua wished faithfully to declare what they had seen, they carried the bunch of

grapes between them, and brought this magnificent cluster into the congregation, as the best evidence in favour of the land which they had surveyed.

Such is the testimony borne by a sincere and zealous Christian to the character of a spiritual life; such the specimen of its blessings which he will exhibit, and of the good which it will bountifully and eternally impart to the spirits of just men made perfect. Faith and courage are inseparably united with a holy chastened boldness in the heart of a devoted servant of Jesus Christ. Infidelity is the parent of cowardice. Not rashly led away by the expectations of good, or by a partial experience of the blessings of the better part, to overlook the difficulties that will beset him, in making his calling and election sure, the Christian soldier, surveying his conflicts, his mercies, his hopes, his rest, his reward, with the eye of faith, and under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, is strong and very courageous for the war. The Lord his God will fight for him; and the victory cannot be doubtful. His enemies are many and mighty; *but the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier*. While anticipating future conquests, and his own distinguished portion in the allotments of everlasting blessedness, he takes of the fruits of the land by the way. He finds, that the God of

his salvation hath sealed him for heaven, and given him, as a gracious refreshment in the hour of his conflict, some present fruits and joys of that love, which is unspeakable and full of glory. He finds also, that the Holy Spirit has stamped his soul with a new and sacred impress, the proof of his adoption into the family of the redeemed. And while this new-creating power thus likens him to the household of God, its graces and consolations are pledges and foretastes of the heavenly country which is shortly and irrevocably to become his own. The Apostolic testimony applies itself to him in its most extensive appropriation; *In whom also, after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.* Undismayed therefore, by what he reads in the word of God, and finds confirmed in his own experience, of the power and malignity of his spiritual enemies, he declares his firm persuasion of an ultimate and glorious victory, which God will enable him to achieve.

These, and men like minded with them, are they, in whose reports of heaven and heavenly things you should confide. They have diligently examined the way and character of salvation. They can shew you of the fruits which they have gathered in their heavenward journey—the righteousness, the peace, the joy, that is in the Holy

Ghost. The Anakim may be in the land. The enemies of peace may be angels, who excel in strength, though fallen. The spirituality of their nature—the numbers in which they assail,—the unity of malignant design with which their attacks are made,—the mighty works attributed to them in Scripture,—and the painful witness which the servant of God bears in his soul of their ability to injure, are circumstances, in themselves discouraging. But, *the Lord is good: a strong hold in the day of trouble: he knoweth them that trust in him:* and no weapon formed against them shall prosper. No power is able to separate them from that love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Under a due persuasion of their defence, their hope, their safety;—holding them fast by God, cleaving to the atonement of the cross, and following hard after the holiness of Christ, they cheerfully prepare for conflict with the powers of darkness. To them the word hath been spoken, *Ye are my witnesses saith the Lord, that I am God.* They have tasted his mercies, They are animated by hopes which he has excited. They are sustained by his love; they are nourished by his fulness. And therefore, speaking that they do know, and testifying that they have seen, they come to their brethren, as Joshua and Caleb to the congregation of Israel, with assurance of almighty sup-

port against every enemy, and of an ultimate reversion of felicity which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.*

III. If the experience of mercy, the pledged and proved fidelity of God, the confidence due to their appointed leader, as the instrument of miracles so numerous and stupendous, could have influenced the men of Israel, to hear with caution and candour the varying reports of those whom they had commissioned, the statements of Caleb and Joshua would have been fully believed. But alas, Israel was a nation of men, *whose god was their belly, whose glory was in their shame, who minded earthly things.* Some few words then are required, in explanation of their wide departure from the true standard of judgment. It is our duty to warn you *against the wickedness of participating in the conduct of this guilty multitude.* The statement of the ten spies gained ready access to their hearts, long debased by the slavery of Egypt,—long hardened by repeated rebellions,—long seared by the judgments inflicted upon them in the wrath of that God whose mercies they had abused, and whose power they had defied. "All the congregation lifted up their voice and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron.

And the whole congregation said unto them, Would God, that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness. And wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land, to fall by the sword; that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?" Nay, the spirit of God informs us,[1] that they hardened their hearts, and in their rebellion actually appointed a captain, in the stead of Moses, to return to their bondage. They trembled more to wage battle with the Anakim, and to scale the lofty walls of their cities, than they exulted in the promised enjoyment of all the fulness of the land of Canaan. They deposed Moses from that authority which the hand of the Most High had bestowed upon him. Instead of preparing to meet the worst that should befal them, by dying beneath the swords of the Anakim, even if the promise of eternal truth should fail, and God himself deceive, they lamented with slavish fear, that they perished not in their chains, or among their countrymen in the wilderness. "O rebellious and deluded men! Is there less hope from your future enemies, when ye meet them arrayed for war, and under the command of Jehovah himself, than from the enemies you

[1] Nehem. ix. 17.

win them to the attainment of heavenly glory. The Saviour himself mourned over a lost and ruined race. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and ye would not!* With what cry were these tears of mercy answered? *Away with him: not this man, but Barabbas!*

Ye cannot imagine, that sin so daring and obdurate should ever prosper. God would certainly vindicate his own cause, and assert his outraged glory. The treacherous spies died upon the very ground they occupied, when they gave false witness of that pleasant land, and decried the truth and power of him, by whom it had been promised. The pestilence that walketh in darkness seized them, and there they died by the plague before the Lord. Of all the vast multitude who distrusted their almighty friend, and daringly murmured against his arrangements, not one entered the promised land. He sware in his wrath that their carcasses should fall in the wilderness, from twenty years old and upwards: and the judgment, fearful as it was, received its accomplishment, to the very letter. These sinners against their own souls, afterwards, as though in express contradiction

of the decree of God, resolved to go up, when he had forbidden them; but the ark of the covenant was not with them. The Most High was not their defence, nor Moses their leader; and they fell a prey to their enemies, who defended the passes of the mountain, and smote them, and slew them. *We see, then, that they could not enter into the promised land, because of unbelief.* Hear this, and fear, ye who listen to the evil report which they who have themselves forsaken Christ, give of religion. *If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not you.* If ye refuse to believe his word—if ye make your estimate of religion, in its requirements and blessings, from those who disobey the one, and undervalue the other—if ye murmur against God, and decline from the way of his salvation, the mercies of his Son, and the law of his love—if ye harden your hearts, as Israel in the provocation, God, justly offended with your guilt, and justly indignant at your ingratitude, may pronounce against you a sentence of exclusion from his kingdom.

(1.) The unfaithful spies, and the guilty multitude, represent a class of persons whom I would solemnly and affectionately warn of their peril; *I mean timid and desponding professors of religion.* You shrink from the dangers which must be encountered, and the might of

those enemies by whom you will be assailed. The giants of innate sin, and outward temptation, are too many, and too powerful, to allow you a hope of subduing them. Will ye, then, turn your backs upon heaven; and are ye disposed to yield without a struggle? For your soul's sake arise from this most unworthy bondage, which Satan is casting around you, by the instrumentality of your own cowardice. The evil is within yourselves. Your hearts are not right with God. Ye are yet unhumbled by a due sense of sin. Ye are unacquainted with your need of a Saviour, or with the infinite love of him who gave his life, as the price of your redemption. The God of this world has blinded your eyes, hath perverted your hearts, and made you say of that service which is perfect freedom, *This is a hard saying, who can bear it?* Is this infidelity to be removed? It must, if ye are to be saved. Far from fearing to devote yourselves to God, and to fight the battles of the head and captain of your salvation, ye must count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord. Ye must say of the difficulties before you, *none of these things move me.* The love of God must be shed abroad in your hearts, by the Holy Ghost given you; otherwise, doubt, and fear, and rebellion, will keep their post over

you like strong men armed. Perfect love casteth out fear. Remember your obligations to redeeming goodness. Remember the supports and triumph which God's infallible word have secured you. We do not deny, that the Anakim will oppose; that the powers, and the prince of darkness will lie in wait to destroy: but *greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.* Their defence is departed from them; the Lord is not among them. Formidable as they may appear, they shall be bread for you. Their very temptations shall be overruled to your advancement in the life of grace, and the consolations of God. He is in the camp of his people. His strength is made perfect in weakness: and the more feeble you are in yourselves, the more unequivocal monuments will you become throughout eternity, of that omnipotence, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Consider also the sad effect which the timidity of the spies had upon all the multitude of Israel. The eyes of the camp are upon you; and if ye swerve in fear and sloth from the combat with Satan, and the strife for heaven, ye may cause the apostacy of others. Resolve to fight the battles of the cross, in the sufficiency of him who died upon it,—and you are safe. *Trust ye in the Lord for*

ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

(2.) There are, however, I hope, many others *possessing a portion of that flame which glowed in the hearts of Caleb and Joshua*—men *gifted with courage for their warfare, and zealous for their God.* Cultivate, I implore you, this holy boldness, which God's own agency has implanted within you. Persevere to the end, undismayed by opposition, unterrified by the frowns or the ridicule of men. It was the perfection of Caleb's character that he followed the Lord *fully;* turning a deaf ear to every mean pleading of unbelief, sensuality, and fear. Joshua was a man of kindred soul; and, when every other individual among the thousands of the rebellious hosts died in the wilderness, he and Caleb obtained a heritage within the borders of Canaan, and of that better land which it typified. Imitate their example. Pray for increasing faith, and reliance upon the word, the truth, the love, the power, the grace of him who is your covenant God in Jesus Christ. His shield will be interposed between you and danger, as Joshua and Caleb were immortal, however fiercely Israel might threaten. *Who shall harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?* They stood alone among the univer-

sal rebellion; not only alone, but undismayed. Fear not ye the face of men. Shrink not to encounter that holy singularity which becomes a Christian—which, as he walks abroad in a world that lieth in wickedness, is one of the badges of his sincerity. The combat will be short, the issue glorious, the reward eternal. Even while the rain falls, the cloud is passing fast over your heads; and an eternal sunshine will succeed. Summon your faith to realize the exceeding great and precious promises, with which God is cheering you onwards. *Be ye faithful unto death;* and that Almighty King, whose you are, and whom you serve, will give you a crown of life, a palm of victory, a throne of glory.

SERMON VI.

THE SABBATH BREAKER STONED.

NUMBERS XV. 32—36

While the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.

"THE heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made: and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it

he had rested from all his work which God created and made." The sabbath is only one day younger than the creation of the world; and was hallowed from the remainder of the week; —not only to commemorate the accomplished work of Jehovah in forming this world, with all its fair variety,—but to give mankind, in every period of time, the means of entering into that rest that remaineth for the people of God.[1] It was observed through the whole course of the patriarchal dispensation, by all who feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. It seems to have been known to the Israelites, during their sojourn and bondage in Egypt. When the manna fell in the wilderness, the sanctity of the sabbath was attested by a succession of miracles. It was solemnly bound upon the reverence of the chosen people, in those commandments, which were written with the finger of God, and delivered to Moses upon the top of Sinai. The most severe punishment was denounced against its violation: and guilty as the tribes of Israel were in so many other instances of rebellion, they appear to have observed the sabbath with a peculiar and conscientious solemnity.

One of their number however, presumed to

[1] See Dr. Owen's learned Exercitations on the Sabbath, prefixed to his Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

violate it by going forth from the camp to gather sticks; and being detected in the offence, was punished with death, in order to vindicate the divine law, and to save others from similar guilt and visitation.

The mild and easy yoke of Jesus Christ has made our sabbath duties more delightful, and our sabbath restrictions less irksome, than those to which the Jews were subjected: but on that very account we incur the more guilt in neglecting them. And surely, observation, inquiry, conscience, will unite to testify, that the wisdom of a sabbath institution, with all the mercy of its purposes, are too generally disregarded. By countless thousands in this Christian land, it is spent in pursuits, which equally defy the wrath, and despise the goodness of God. And who of us my brethren, shall pronounce his soul free from the guilt of dishonouring its extensive and spiritual requirements, as a divine command, a mean of grace, an opportunity of delightful and endearing communion with God in Christ Jesus? Common violations of this holy day call therefore upon every one of us for deep humiliation, for an earnest appeal to the great atonement of the cross, and for grace to go and sin no more. To such feelings, and such resource, does the text also invite us. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

I. The first subject of inquiry and self-application, is obviously THE GUILT OF THE TRANSGRESSOR.

"When the children of Israel were in the wilderness they found a man that gathered sticks on the sabbath day." Such an employment was a palpable violation of the divine command. God had enjoined the observance of his own day with peculiar solemnity. No work was to be done, save that of the first necessity, —no fire to be kindled throughout all the tents of Israel. Yet did this man, heedless of the divine prohibition, and unwarned by former visitations of judgment on the people, prophane the sabbath by a secular and forbidden labour.

It may be asked, "Did his offence deserve so stern a rebuke, as that by which it was visited?" It may be inquired concerning this sin, "Was it not a little one?" The right of God to demand a day of exclusive devotion to himself by the creatures whom his hand formed, his providence supplies, and the blood of his Son redeemed, may be disputed and practically denied, by such as listen to the suggestions of pride and unbelief, rather than to the meek and lowly instructions of the Spirit of truth and life. Was the guilt of Adam then small, when, the whole range of Paradise being freely given to him, he plucked and ate the fruit of the only

tree which God had forbidden him to touch? Of like character was the sin against the sabbath, which God claimed to himself, leaving all the other days of the week for the temporal claims, wants, duties, and recreations of his creatures? And is he not walking in the path of a like disobedience, and fearfully exposed to its consequences, who instead of joining his brethren of the congregation, in the gracious employments befitting the sacred day, his own character as a sinner, his obligations, as one of the ransomed of the cross of Christ, his hope as a candidate for that eternal sabbath which shall be spent by the people of God around the throne, is immersed in some sordid employment, going to his house, his farm, his merchandize? That man surely imagines gold to be the only worthy object of pursuit; and the solemnities of the Lord's day only seasonable opportunities of maturing plans for the increase of wealth, because they might be interrupted amidst the bustle of every day life and occupation. Wherein consists the difference between him who can turn his back unmoved upon all the blessings of sabbath appointments, and all the promises of sabbath mercies, to absorb his time, and his cares, and his soul, in heaping up riches, and him whom the watchmen of the congregation detected gathering sticks in the wilderness, on the day of God?

Wealth may come by the unhallowed effort; but it will not come alone. Such dishonour poured upon a divine command,—such a cowardly distrust of God, as cannot rest upon his providence and his promise for a sufficient increase to the six days of permitted labour,—such a guilty avarice of time, as plunders from the Almighty those hours which he had separated for himself, will have its reward. The gold thus gotten may sparkle, the luxuries thus obtained may delight and exhilarate: but the one shall ere long eat into the offender's peace like fire; and the other shall nourish up his soul for the day of slaughter. No imaginary necessity—a necessity conjured up by an inordinate love of this present world, and a criminally blind indifference to the one thing needful, should induce you to dishonour the sabbath by unhallowed labour. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*—seek it in conscientious obedience to sabbath duties, *and all other things shall be added unto you.*

This Israelite sinned against his mercies, and his soul, *by absenting himself from public worship*, in order to provide for some bodily want, or to obtain some sensual gratification. On the Lord's day the unsearchable riches of Christ, the pardon of sin, the peace of God the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, and all the unmea-

sured abundance of redeeming compassion are offered to the hand, and solicit the hearts of all. The throne of God is then peculiarly accessible by those who approach him with the mingled sacrifice of prayer and praise, and endeavour to receive with meekness that ingrafted word which is able to save their souls. Are these mercies confessedly great in the estimation of every man who desires access to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, by means of the services and institutions of the sabbaths and sanctuaries of God? And shall we say, that it is a trifling offence to reject them—and to flee from the house of God to common unblest employment; as Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord? Is it a small thing to exchange that place in which God hath said to every one of his waiting servants, "I will come unto thee and bless thee," for an excursion of pleasure, a distant journey, á day of revelry and dissipation, whether at home or abroad? It often happens indeed, that public worship is attended in the morning of the sabbath; and then a licence is claimed to spend the remainder of the day among those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; or at least in an utter and absolute estrangement from every sacred employment. But hath God consented to this unnatural division; or is it not an unhallowed

compromise between himself and sin, which he will indignantly reject? Were Ananias and Sapphira permitted to keep back a part of the price of the land, when the whole had been dedicated? And will God hold them guiltless, who deduct part of his peculiar day to spend it in idolatrous sacrifice to the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life? Is it possible, that the devotion of those who contemplate such a monstrous intermixture of God and Mammon, should be enkindled on the altar of the Saviour's love? As well might we have sought such devotion in the ceremonial of the rebel Israelites, when they rose from their idolatrous worship of the golden calf to eat, and to drink, and to play. Follow such worshippers into the scenes of their sabbath evening enjoyments. Listen to the prevailing subject of their conversation. Do they celebrate the glories of God in providence and redemption; the need of man; the love of Jesus Christ; the holiness of his law; the perfection of his example; the omnipotence and freeness of his grace; the privileges of his servants; the hopes of his kingdom; and the promised vision of his everlasting blessedness? Do their hearts burn within them, as these high subjects of Christian communion are opened from the page of God, or from the grateful record of a Christian's experience? Nothing alas,

like this. O, if Jesus Christ should join himself to us, on the evenings of our sabbaths, as he joined the two disciples in their walk to Emmaus on that of his resurrection, and put the same question to us, *What manner of communications are these that ye have one with another?* With what shame and confusion of face must the answer be returned.

There was to be a sabbath of the Lord in the *dwellings* of the Israelites, as well as in the services of the congregation and the sanctuary. The same commandment is given to us. But with how many of us does the world monopolize every hour, not spent in the house of prayer; leaving us no leisure for advancing the spiritual interests of our families, or for the secret exercise of personal religion and communion with Him who is the way and the truth, and the life of man. The religious character of a people may be fairly and accurately measured by the mode in which the Sabbath is improved or profaned. The principle of judgment is obvious. If the day which God claims exclusively for himself, be not devoted to his honour, and spent in his appointed services, all the others, over which men claim an undeniable right, will be devoted to the pursuits in which fallen nature delights; every one walking in the sight of his own eyes, and in the imagination of his own

heart. Take this standard of decision, and, although I trust, that the result will be more favourable to Great Britain, than to any other land within the pale of Christianity, yet shall we come awfully behind the spirit of that requirement, *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*. Let us not be told, that custom has affixed a seal of authority and sanction to such appropriations of the Sabbath day, as those by which it is desecrated and polluted. If custom be commensurate in authority with the law of God, —if it will be produced before the tribunal of Christ, as the rule of his great assize, we shall do well to obey it. But, if the word which he hath spoken shall judge us in the last day, and all other rules will be as worthless as the ashes of the world, when it shall have perished in the last conflagration, it surely becomes those who must stand then and there for an eternal award, not to follow a multitude to do evil. They should receive and obey the written word; that they may find mercy of the Lord in that day, through a previous interest in the death and intercession of the Saviour Judge.

If, however, we would rightly estimate the guilt of this transgressor, we must regard, not merely his offence, but *the circumstances of aggravation under which it was committed.* God had been making a distinction between sins of

ignorance, and sins of daring presumption. For the former, an atonement might be made, for the latter, none. *The soul that doeth presumptuously reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him.*[1] While a denunciation so fearful was still sounding in the ears of the children of Israel, this rebellious man, openly and contemptuously profaned the sabbath; thus practically avowing his persuasion, that the prohibition of God was unreasonable, his authority usurped, his mercy worthless, his wrath contemptible. Will it now be said, that his offence was light and venial? Will it be added, that under the Christian dispensation, they shall be as little culpable who set at nought the fourth commandment, neglect the Sabbath, nay, with premeditated purpose pollute and dishonour it? Do they not deserve wrath, who thus assume an attitude of determined hostility to their God and Saviour, and cry, "Who is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" Shall they escape, who, instead of partaking in the awful joy, the humble gratitude,

[1] Numbers xv. 30, 31.

the holy peace, the animating hope, which a sanctified improvement of the Lord's day so abundantly ministers, forsake its assemblies, and lightly esteem its salvation? If the Sabbath were useful to man, even in the condition of his perfection and bliss in Paradise, how much more necessary to him have its institutions become, as a sinner, in need of pardon,—a bondman, in need of a Redeemer, a perishing creature, in need of the bread of God which he gave for the life of the world. The appointment of this gracious day was not essential to the honour or the happiness of the Almighty. Enthroned in heaven, infinitely blessed in his own perfections, and receiving ceaseless homage and adoration from angels and archangels, in multitude unnumbered, in grandeur of state and character inconceivable, how could God have need of the Sabbath praise and service of such a creature as man? Why then was the Sabbath made? As a provision of love,—as an act of infinite compassion,—as an opportunity afforded to sinners of attaining that eternal life which consists in "knowing the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." And yet, there are myriads of the very souls for whom the Sabbath was provided, who deem God a hard master, because he requires them to hallow his day, and improve it to their soul's health with an exclusive devotion.

There are men, there are multitudes of men, who in full, determined, systematic purpose, consume those hours which might minister to their salvation, in acts of flagrant dishonour to the God who gave the Sabbath, and will require it at their hands. And what is this, but to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness? What is this, but that settled, malignant ingratitude of the unrenewed and rebellious heart, which not only receives the grace of God in vain, but perverts a gift and a mercy, into an occasion of increased rebellion and indignity? O that every one of us, in this solemn view of the deep guilt which the sin of Sabbath-breaking involves, and the punishment it provokes, may cry in the salutary anxiety of the Psalmist, *Keep thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not get the dominion over me. So shall I be undefiled, and I shall be innocent from the great offence.*

II. If such be the character of the transgression, we must be prepared secondly to expect—THE DECISION OF GOD AGAINST IT. They who found the criminal brought him to Moses and Aaron, and all the congregation. The leaders of Israel put him into ward, as had been already done in the case of the blasphemer (Levit. xxiv. 12.) until the mind of the Lord for his punishment could be expressly obtained. They well knew that he must die, for so God himself had

declared:[1] but by what kind of death, and whether by the hand of heaven, or of the people, they knew not, and therefore they kept him in custody until they could inquire. They did their vowed and bounden duty, as the watchmen of Israel: and happy were it for our more favoured portion of the camp of God, if they whose solemn duty it is, "truly and indifferently to minister justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of true religion and virtue," would fearlessly exercise their authority against the crime of Sabbath-breaking,—a crime, equally opposed to the law of God, the law of the land, the purity of the national character, the public peace, and the common salvation. O, for the mantle and the Spirit of Nehemiah! That upright, intrepid, conscientious ruler, reproved the Sabbath-breakers of his country, her merchants, her mariners, her tradesmen, her nobles. He said unto them, as he beheld the avidity with which they turned the day of God into a day of merchandize, "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? As they persisted in the desecration, he cried, with a holy zeal for the honour of his God, which neither the fear, nor the favour of man could extinguish or re-

[1] Exod xxxi. 14; xxxv. 2.

press, "If ye do so again, I will lay hands on you."[1]

The matter being thus referred to the Most High, he instantly condemned the malefactor to a severe and ignominious fate. "The Lord said unto Moses, The man shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, that he died; as the Lord commanded Moses." Will it again be asked, was not the punishment greater than the offence? Consider the sin itself, the circumstances of defiance by which it was aggravated, the jealous regard of God for the sanctity of his law. Then judge, whether, while the ruler of Israel, enforced his commands by declarations of temporal visitation or prosperity, the sentence did not alike befit the crime, the criminal, and the lawgiver. Do you still hesitate in coming to such a conclusion? Then consider, that a judgment of this decisive character was probably mercy to the people. Had this man been spared, in answer to the inquiry made by Moses, his escape, thus allowed by God himself, would have been a stumbling stone, and a rock of offence to his brethren. Many, instead of being

[1] Nehemiah xiii. 15—21

deterred from polluting the sabbath, would have been emboldened to partake his sin. And that commandment, which in its breach and transgression has been the first awful step in the downward path of temporal and eternal ruin to thoughtless or presumptuous sinners, would have been set at nought, and mocked and broken, under the deluding seduction of present impunity. When justice strikes at the offender's life, it is not only in punishment of his sin, but in mercy to others, that being warned, they may abstain from such transgression and live.

We may safely leave it to the author of this procedure, to justify his own dealing, assured that no injunction was ever given for the punishment of sin, which the disclosures of the eternal day shall not prove to have originated in perfect love and justice. We should rather learn from the lesson of caution thus so solemnly read to ourselves, to avoid an offence, subjecting us not merely to present judgment, but to the wrath of him, who after he hath killed, hath power to destroy both body and soul in hell. It may be, that no immediate woe shall fall upon our heads. It may be, that the arm of human law is too short, or its awards too negligently enforced, to visit us for the violation of the sabbath. But the Lord of the Sabbath will reckon

with us. His eye is not closed, that it cannot see; his ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear; his memory is not impaired, that it cannot preserve the recollection of profane, prayerless, godless sabbaths, or of those, in which we gave many of those sacred hours, and all the life, and love, and energy of our hearts, to some earnal, vain, sensual, frivolous, or sordid pursuit. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* And he who persists in offending, because judgment against an evil work is not executed speedily; but wilfully overlooks the recompences of the tribunal of Christ, acts with as much inconsistency, as he, who having been warned of the rocks before him, sails proudly in their very track, nor dreams of danger, until he perish in the waters. We have been mercifully warned. The command to hallow the sabbath is openly proclaimed on the morning of every Lord's day, in the house of God. Its tender mercies solicit us to pass it in those sanctifying employments, which may advance our meetness for the sabbath of eternity. Is a denunciation of death made against the violation of this command; and is the fate of this sinner against his own soul recorded? It is for our example, that when we open our eyes upon the light of the sabbath, we may arouse from the

slumber of the soul to cry, *This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice, and be glad in it.*

It has been my aim, throughout this discourse, to commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. I trust, however, it will not be deemed inconsistent with ministerial moderation, as I am sure it is not with ministerial affection and love, to address those two classes, into which the fourth commandment, in the spiritual extent of its application, divides every community of Christian worshippers.

(1.) *Let me first address those who break the sabbath by following their worldly business.* Is it nothing to you to pour contempt upon the blessed day, which the free compassions of a bounteous God provided for our growth in grace with the church below, and to prepare us for our glorified repose with the church above? You think God a hard master, because an evil heart of unbelief rebels against sabbath duties, as a task, instead of rightly appreciating sabbath employments, as the best privilege of redeemed and sanctified men. Some pressure of worldly business tempts you to intrude upon the day of God, and rob him of his honour and service. Do you really expect that plans so forwarded should prosper?

Can the blessing of the Almighty rest upon that very conduct, which flagrantly insults him? Let me suppose your wishes granted; and the wealth thus dearly purchased to be your own. *O, what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

But you are mournfully in error to suppose, that any man's temporal interest is eventually and substantially advanced, by his labour on the day of God. Sir Matthew Hale, one of the most profound among those gifted men who have administered the laws and justice of England, has given a testimony to the contrary. He was no thoughtless enthusiast; but an inflexible judge, a profound scholar, and a sincere, humble, zealous believer in the grace and gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. "I have found," says this admirable man, "by a strict and diligent observation, that a conscientious regard to the duties of the Lord's day, hath been attended with a blessing upon the rest of my time: and the week that hath been so begun hath been blessed and prospered to me. And on the other side, when I have been negligent of the duties of this day, the rest of the week hath been unsuccessful and unhappy to my own secular employments: so that I could easily make an

estimate of my worldly success through the week following, by the manner in which I passed that day which God hath declared holy to himself."[1] Such also, I apprehend, would be the very general experience of observant men. O, call not the sabbath a weariness. They who have been most in the spirit on the Lord's day, have consecrated these seasons in their dearest remembrance, as hours in which their peace and joy have most abounded; and in which, mounting up to heaven with wings as eagles, upon the ascending sacrifice of prayer and praise, "they have looked by faith into the invisible state, and obtained some glimpses, and some foretastes of that blessedness which it shall reveal and impart hereafter." Has the desecrated sabbath given you any thing to compare with this distinction? Surely not. Cast in, then, your lot with those who keep it holy. God the Father waits to bless your sanctification of his appointment. God the Son waits to invest you with the riches of his salvation. God the Holy Ghost waits to apply to your souls all the means of grace which the sabbath affords. Ye will not surely continue to refuse the treble mercy, so long offered, so criminally neglected. *Turn ye,*

[1] Sir Matthew Hale's Contemplations, p. 260.

turn ye, for why will ye die? The sabbath-breaker in Israel perished as a contemner of the law. *If he, then, that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing; and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?*

(2.) To *those who keep holy the sabbath-day* little is necessary to be said. Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Ye know the value of sabbath mercies, and the high privilege of coming to "the Mount Sion, the city of the Living God, the new Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven; and to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel." Go on to sanctify the Lord's day; and let your profiting appear unto all men. Deal with those parts of the day not employed in public worship, as the Saviour dealt with the bread which remained over and above, unto the five thousand which had eaten—*gather up the fragments*

that remain, that nothing be lost. Fill up the intervals of general duty by family instruction, edifying conversation, private prayer, meditation, self-examination, and holy resolves for God and goodness, made under a sense of his love, and in dependence upon the Almighty sufficiency of his grace. You are employed on the sabbath, as you hope to be employed for ever. Give it, then, more of your heart and affection. Go on "from strength to strength, until every one of you in Zion appeareth before God." Often hath he "brought you into his holy mountain, and made you joyful in his house of prayer." O, let the bread of life, and the water of salvation, and the memorials of a crucified Redeemer, which you have there received, invigorate you for your journey toward the mountain of God above. Soon shall your feet stand upon the everlasting hills. Soon shall you behold the dawning of the eternal sabbath. Soon shall you realize your portion in its enduring and transcendent felicities. And soon shall you commence that united rest and service, which while it satisfies every desire, even of an archangel's mind, will be freely and for ever given to the lowliest believer, who shall have washed his robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb.

SERMON VII.

THE GUILT AND PUNISHMENT OF KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM.

NUMBERS XVI. 31—35.

It came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

"My well beloved," saith Jehovah, rebuking his ancient people in the language of parable,—"my well beloved has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choic-

est vine; and he built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" This affecting appeal, and the deep condemnation of the concluding question, applied to the Jews in every period of their history; and certainly, with the utmost propriety, to the years of their sojourn in the wilderness. All their experience was goodness, and all their return ingratitude—an ingratitude, which, by a dreadful perversity, the very profusion of their mercies seemed to excite. The conspiracy of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, adds another instance to those already considered. If the iniquity of these offenders, and their guilty associates had been buried in the earth that opened to receive them, or had been consumed in the fire that devoured them, the history would indeed have recorded a heinous crime, and an awful judgment; yet both inapplicable to ourselves. But if the same spirit now work in the children of disobedience,—if unsanctified and unrestrained men still despise dominion,

speak evil of dignities, whether human or divine, and revolt against authorities, civil and religious, which God himself hath ordained, it is our part to warn you of the fate of these transgressors. It is our duty to cry, *Behold, the goodness and severity of God! towards them which fell severity, but towards you goodness, if ye continue in his goodness; otherwise ye also shall be cut off.* It is your part to fear God, and receive instruction.

The history describes a double rebellion, and a double punishment.

I. Of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

II. Of the Israelites.

I. *The wages of sin is death.* Were every transgression visited with the strictness of the divine law which it violates, it would incur this fearful penalty. But there are degrees in the malignity of an offence, arising out of the circumstances under which it is committed; and these the Judge of all the earth regards. Whether we view the nature of the crime, or the situation of the offenders, the conspiracy now under our consideration assumes a character of no ordinary malignity.

(1.) *The authors of this daring revolt were men of weight and influence in the camp of Israel.* Korah, with whom it commenced, was

the near relative of Moses and Aaron.[1] He unsealed this fountain of bitter waters, of which so many thousands drank and died. He seems to have seduced Dathan and Abiram; and from them the rebellion spread through two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown. Well might the injured ruler of Israel have exclaimed, as he beheld the perfidy of one, who should have stood on his part, and on the part of God through evil report, and good report. "It was not an enemy that reproached me, for then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; for then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." It is thus, that religion is often wounded in the house of her friends,—thus, that they whom God has raised above their fellows, to be the marks of observance and imitation, in eminent stations of the Church, often employ their very distinctions to become stones of stumbling, and rocks of offence to those over whom their influence extends. O, with what a trembling hand should every man whom God has placed among

[1] Exodus vi. 18, 20, 21.

the princes of the congregation, receive the solemn responsibility with which his soul is charged! An awful portion of this responsibility attaches to many of you. Your circumstances, and relations, and influence, are in many cases of a character so extensive, and so important,—such numbers must look up to you to give them examples, and a tone of conduct which may have a mighty bearing upon their everlasting bliss or woe, that I should be inexcusably faithless to my office, did I not anxiously and affectionately beseech you to be clear from the blood of all men. Through your example Almighty God must be glorified or dishonoured. Through your example and conversation the cross of Christ must become more or less a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death to others. Through your walk and demeanour the converting and renewing work of the Holy Ghost must be honoured, or lightly esteemed. Ye are epistles known and read of all men. Shall then, they who regard you, behold in you that opposition to the law of God, that contempt for his authority, that dishonour of his day, that insensibility to his love, that proud defiance of his inconceivable goodness, in the work of salvation, which may become watchwords and incentives to their own disobedience? Or shall they see your good works,

and glorify your Father which is in heaven? Why was the woe pronounced upon Chorazin and Bethsaida? Why should their condemnation be greater than that of Tyre and Sidon? Because they had received more largely of the Saviour's mercy, than their less favoured neighbours, and had not improved it. *To whom much is given, from him will much be required.* Were an opinion asked from any individual in this assembly concerning the guilt of Korah, one answer only would be returned. His sin was charged with a deeper malignity, because he was a chief in Israel. Do not believe, that elevated station is a licence for sin. *God is no respecter of persons.* If he have respect at all, it will be to a comparison of the means of usefulness, with the mischief which their abuse may have perpetrated. Korah must answer for his individual sin. And how heavy, in addition to the burden, would he feel the weight of Dathan and Abiram, the two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, and the fourteen thousand seven hundred men of the congregation who died in the plague! If ye have indeed ten talents, employ them faithfully to the master's use,—so shall ye avoid condemnation. So shall every one of you, having earnestly endeavoured, (through the Spirit obtained in answer to prayer,) to discharge the vast obligations which the salvation

of a crucified Saviour has laid upon him, hear that award which will be his passport to everlasting blessedness, *Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

(2.) St. Jude in his dark catalogue of transgressions, speaks of those who are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts. St. Peter, in nearly the same words, foretels a woe and judgment upon those who walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and are presumptuous, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Such were these conspirators; and *the character of the offence* requires consideration. If ever power were unenviable, it was surely the authority of Moses and Aaron: yet was it impatiently borne by men who knew its difficulties, and who ought to have given an example of ready, chearful, universal, holy submission. They gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron, and said unto them; "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Wherefore then, lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" What? was the authority of Moses and Aaron usurped; or had it not been conferred immediately by God himself? Deeply then, was the Lord dishonoured by so flagrant an opposition to his own appointment, and to the magis-

trate who carried the sword by his especial direction. And how unworthy, how mean, how servile was the gross flattery of this sinful people!—They holy! Witness the number and character of their offences, committed in an unbroken succession of murmurs and rebellions. Alas, contempt of lawful authority too frequently exhibits itself in the same manner, and condescends to aim at power and distinction by calumniating the governors, and flattering the governed. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, were resisting the ordinance of God: and the same disposition to cast off his yoke, and to become independent of his government, and to say of his glorified Son, "We will not have this man to reign over us," is a crime of an original too remote to be traced. It commenced with that eventful period, when the angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, were reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. Man in paradise committed the sin, when, tempted by Satan, he would become as God knowing good and evil. Ever since the deep pollution of that fall, has the guilty creature, until renewed in the spirit of his mind, opposed the government of God over him, and said to the Almighty in every effort to restrain his sins, to bring him into a salutary submission to the divine law,

and an acquaintance with the merciful restraints and pure salvation of the everlasting gospel. *Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* A guilty ambition of becoming more than the unsearchable decisions of eternal wisdom has seen good to make them, prompts men to disturb the peace and harmony of the church and the community. Diotrephes loved to have the pre-eminence; and therefore would not acknowledge the apostolic authority, or listen to the pastoral counsels of the beloved John. Korah was not contented to remain a Levite, while Aaron was the priest. Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Reuben, envied the advancement of Moses; and therefore brought guilt, rebellion, and death among the people of the Lord. Alas, *the spirit that is in us lusteth to envy.* O, for the chastized feeling, the wise submission, the unruffled peace of that man's soul, whose delight was the law, whose one desire was the salvation of Christ; and who therefore looked with an eye of equal regard upon every outward condition of life, and cried, *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* Ashamed to be a Levite! ashamed to be employed in the inferior services of the tabernacle! and to approach God in the more humble department of its daily ministrations! Little indeed could

Korah know of his distinction and privilege, little of the happier and holier spirit of that man after God's own heart, who cried, *I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* To be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water *there* is an unmerited distinction. What then will be their condemnation who disturb the general repose, and destroy their own usefulness by aiming at secular authority, increase of power, or wealth from the Church, looking upon their sacred function, as a stepping stone to personal distinction, instead of an opportunity to serve God, and bring sinners within the fold of Jesus Christ, for eternal life! We are all too little desirous of glorifying our heavenly Father in that state of life to which he hath been pleased to call us. We aim at something beyond it. Such ambition displays little of the mind that was in Christ Jesus; and little thankfulness for the mercies we possess. We are here this day before God, fallen, yet with his hand of Almighty love and power to raise us even to heaven—enslaved to sin, yet ransomed by the blood of his own Son,—rebels, yet listening to a proclamation of peace and mercy,—poor and helpless, yet obtaining free access to the unsearchable riches of Christ,—deserving nothing, and yet invited to possess blessings the fulness and

grandeur of which saints in light can alone conceive. Yet, with what a grovelling and mistaken choice do we turn from them, harass our own minds, and too often mislead and agitate our brethren in a sinful strife for the pre-eminence of wealth or station. And how vain is the search in general! We ask, we seek, we strive, we have not, because like the sinners in the camp of Israel, we ask, seek, strive amiss, "that we may consume it upon our lusts." If we could discover the miseries which our indulged wishes would produce, how thankfully should we welcome the merciful appointments of that Providence who thus works to "take from us all hurtful things, and gives us only such things as be profitable for us!" How surely should we cry, as it were to such interpositions of heaven, when they interfere to cross our desires, as David to Abigail when she crossed him in the way, and prevented him from charging his soul with the murder of Nabal, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel that sent thee this day to meet me.*

(3.) The sin of Korah and his company included *a guilty contempt of the appointed salvation.* Moses and Aaron were respectively, not only temporal rulers and priests, but types of Jesus Christ; the one in his regal, the other in his priestly office. These offices the rebellious

men endeavoured to usurp,—to offer their own incense in their own censers; and thus to alter the course of that figurative service and ceremonial, which shadowed forth the mediation and death of the great offering for sin, and the souls of sinners. This was no common offence. They rejected their own mercies. They used their mistaken diligence and dangerous influence, to pervert the hosts of Israel from following the appointments of a merciful God for their pardon. Deluded, guilty men! Are they however alone guilty—they alone deluded? Beware, my brethren, lest ye deny the priesthood, and throw off the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Beware, lest ye endeavour to introduce among the professing Israel of God, any other means of spiritual acceptance, than the appointed death and intercession of his Son. If ye reject his mediation—if ye deny the eternal divinity of his nature—its gracious, though mysterious union with human flesh—the fulfilment of the law by his obedience—the infinite propitiation for sin, effected by his crucifixion—his almighty pleading at the right hand of the everlasting Father—and the sole access which sinners possess to God through him, ye are opposing the immutable laws of the appointed salvation, and ye cannot escape. *If ye believe not that I am he,* said the Saviour to

the infidels of his incarnate day—*If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

So glaring, and so dangerous was the offence of Korah and his company, that, when their hearts remained unchanged, and their rebellion obdurate, after Moses had prayed in their behalf, he was obliged to vindicate his own righteous administration, and call for punishment upon them. "Respect not thou their offering. I have not taken one ass from them; neither have I hurt one of them." As if however, in defiance of that judgment which their iniquity had awakened, when Israel was warned to flee and touch nothing of their's, lest they should be consumed, did these presumptuous men, Dathan and Abiram come out, and stand in the door of their tents, and their wives and their sons, and their little children. Korah was probably with the two hundred and fifty men, who had wickedly offered forbidden incense before the sanctuary of the Lord. But the hour of visitation came. They had been often reproved; they had hardened their neck; and they were now suddenly to be cut off, and that without remedy. The Lord confirmed the authority of Moses. "The earth opened, and swallowed up Dathan, Abiram, and their families. They went down living into the pit; the earth closed

upon them and they perished from among the congregation." The two hundred and fifty princes, with Korah, as it would appear, at their head, had offered forbidden fire; and like Nadab and Abihu, died by fire sent in righteous judgment from heaven. If any of you, my brethren, are rebelling against the appointments of a gracious God, in the gospel of his salvation, consider the peril in which your souls, with their everlasting all are placed. If he who has been interceding for you, and through whose intercession, awfully as ye have neglected it, ye have been spared from the infliction of the second death, should represent this obdurate rebellion to his Father, and say, "Respect not thou their offering,"—if all his goodness should be abused—his offered mercy despised, how can ye escape? He is now prolonging the accepted time, and calling on you —it may be once more, to repent, believe, and live. Will ye, as it were, stand in the door of your tents, to glory in your opposition, and dare the worst? *If a man will not repent, God hath whet his sword, he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.* Hitherto the sword hath not fallen; the arrow hath not been sped. O perish not in the gainsaying of Korah. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn*

to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

II. That the leaders of this rebellion, with their wives and little ones, except the children of Korah, who probably partook not their father's sin, for they died not,[1] and that two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly should thus offend and perish, was a dreadful instance of human iniquity, and divine visitation: but neither the evil nor the punishment rested here. *The Israelites also offended, and the wrath of God fell upon them.* They seemed at first seized with a dread as salutary as it was well-founded. "All Israel that were round about Dathan and Abiram fled at the cry of them; for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also." Was the feeling then deep, permanent, and abiding; or superficial, and transient? As the ship pursues her path through the waves, makes a long furrow through the deep, and leaves a track of foam behind her, for a little time distinct and well defined, but soon mingling with the world of waters, and seen no more, so was it with the judgment of heaven on Korah, and with Israel's recollection of its terrors. It endured for the night, but discontent and rebellion came in the morning.

[1] Numbers xxvi. 11.

"On the morrow the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord." And had not the light cloud, the visible symbol of the Deity, which during this rebellion seems to have retreated within the most Holy place, again left it, and covered the tabernacle of the congregation, the same violence would probably have been offered to the ministers of God, with which Caleb and Joshua were threatened, when they were saved by a like interference. Thus provoked and defied, Jehovah drew as it were his hand from his bosom, and said to Moses and Aaron, as his discriminating judgment separated the righteous from the wicked, "Get thee up from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." True to their blessed principles, as the friends of Israel whom no insults could move to vengeance, they fell on their faces to intercede for these transgressors, in the moment of their presumptuous sin. But although their prayer was heard in behalf of the congregation generally, the threat was put into such instant execution against the most guilty, that when Moses arose from the posture of prayer, he saw the destroyer doing his work of death in the camp:—*the plague was begun.* Aaron was commanded, as the only remedy in this most dreadful extremity, "to take a censer

and put fire therein from the altar, and put on incense, and to go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them." Time did not permit to offer a burnt sacrifice; but the ashes from the altar on which the victim was consumed would suffice. Aaron ran toward the camp, made the atonement, stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed; but not until fourteen thousand seven hundred persons had perished by its visitation. Happy they who make the sins of others their caution! Happy we, if Korah, Dathan, and Abiram shall teach us to avoid their iniquity and their death.

The censers which had been hallowed to offer an incense, however mistaken, were made broad plates, as a covering to the altar, and for a memorial to the Israelites of the mercy and judgment of God. But they forgat both, even before the censers could be so applied; and they were visited with more calamities. The altar is destroyed, the place thereof knoweth it no more. The brazen plates have perished: but the fact is recorded for our instruction; that instead of continuing to provoke the long-suffering of our heavenly Father, in his Son, we may take with us words of penitence, and turn again unto the Lord; lest being often warned in vain, judgment should at length be sent without a warning, and there should be

none to deliver us. *To day, while it is called to day, harden not your hearts.*

(1.) *Learn then from hence, the value of that Saviour to whom the infinite compassions of God direct you in the gospel.* The sentence of wrath was spoken, and its execution was begun. Moses saw the havoc made by death through the ranks of Israel; and Aaron was sent forth to make atonement and intercession. How then did he proceed to discharge his important office? As became the dignity of his character, the injury done to him by their rebellion, the gravity of his age, or the danger of infection and death in the camp? Nothing of this kind had place within him, or directed his movements. Forgetful of every thing, except the command of Moses, and the need of Israel, he ran into the midst of the congregation: and though the plague was begun, put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. There he stood, self-devoted, and undismayed, the messenger of mercy, the only hope of life to guilty Israel. There he took his dangerous post of duty, between the dead and the living. There his atonement was accepted, his prayer heard, and the plague stayed. So far as depended on his speed, and effort, not a moment was lost, not an Israelite died. Illustrious type of him whom *God made to be sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be*

made the righteousness of God in him! There is an infection of sin in the world, which only the cross and pleading of Jesus Christ can stay, and remove. In mercy to its lost condition, he is sent by the insulted Father. And how does he execute his commission? slowly, unwillingly, hesitatingly, fearfully? Look into the gospels, and know—consult the record of salvation, and judge. He descends from the realms of glory, with unreserved chearfulness. One only voice is heard, as he goes to his appointed work, *I delight to do thy will, O God, yea thy law is within my heart.* Every thing is forgotten, except the glory of his Father, and the need of a guilty rebellious, and perishing world. He enters the defiled and dying camp. He takes his post of duty, and of suffering, among the stricken thousands. He stands between the dead and the living, between the Eternal Judge, and the souls upon whom a sentence of condemnation has been passed. Does he shrink in the hour of trial? No, He is alike the priest and the victim. The plague must reach him, the chastisement of our peace must be laid upon him, *we must have redemption through his blood, even the remission of sins.* Nature, indeed, that weak, that timid nature, which he assumed, may shrink from its suffering, and he may cry, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup*

pass from me. It is not possible; and he adds, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* His soul is made an offering for sin; and the atonement is completed. But where is the intercession? Was it not heard upon the cross, in behalf of the very sinners who nailed him to it? *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Is it not carried forward at this hour? Are not the coals burning in the censer, and the bright cloud of his mediation going up as an acceptable incense to the Father? And as Aaron's interference preserved the dying thousands of Israel, is not the risen and glorified High Priest of our profession *able to save to the uttermost all them that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them?* We admire the ready devotion of Aaron. Shall we not bless and praise the infinite grace and love which filled the Saviour's heart, when he placed himself in our stead, and bought us with his life? Greatly hath "God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!"—

Did Aaron establish a claim upon the affectionate gratitude and zealous obedience of the men whom his mediation saved alive: and would they have been utterly inexcusable to rebel against him? What then, will be their guilt, their shame, their ingratitude, who can receive this

best gift of the grace of God in vain, see no beauty in the Redeemer why they should desire him; but close their hearts against him, in cold disregard? *If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.* The golden sceptre of the Father's grace is extended through him to all. Touch it, my brethren, and live. Have you neglected mercy, sinned against your souls; and do ye fear the coming death? Flee to the salvation of the Lord, your substitute, and Redeemer. Him that cometh he will in no wise cast out. But resist his authority no more. Bow down before him in the humility of penitence: and accept him, not only as your Priest, but as your exclusive Sovereign.

(2.) Behold also, *the necessity of being separate from sinners.* Before the judgment was inflicted, Moses was commanded to warn the congregation, and to bid them get up from, the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Vainly, however, did he appeal to these leaders of the rebellion. They persisted in their hardness of heart; and wrath fell upon them to the uttermost. He then besought the whole congregation; "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of their's, lest ye be consumed in all their sins." Even thus would we address you: *We are am-*

bassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Be not partakers with other men's sins. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Ever before judgement comes, there is a separation, that wrath may fall upon the offenders. And when the last judgment shall arrive, there will be a separation of the righteous and the wicked, entire, final, eternal. Make that separation now. "Come ye out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing," that God may receive you. The Israelites fled at the cry of the guilty men, whom the earth opened to receive: for they said, "Lest it swallow us up also." Could we also hear with the quickened sense of faith, the lamentations of those, over whom the pit has closed, whose day of mercy is past, whose dark night of woe and judgment is come, to pass away no more for ever, we should surely be warned. Surely warned! Alas, if we hear and believe not Moses and the prophets, and the Redeemer, speaking in the scriptures of salvation, neither shall we be persuaded though one rose from the dead. Flee then from the ways of evil, from the society of transgressors, and from the wrath of God. Embrace salvation in the mercies of Jesus Christ; and sin

no more, lest a worse thing happen unto you. Imagine, while you are lingering in the way of death, that you feel the touch, and hear the voice of that angel, who laid hold on the hand of Lot, as he lingered in the neighbourhood of Sodom, and cried, *Escape for thy life. Look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.*

SERMON VIII.

PUNISHMENT DENOUNCED AGAINST MOSES AND AARON.

NUMBERS XX. 12.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given you.

"THE sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" meets the Christian continually, to restrain him from sin, like that flaming weapon in the hand of the cherubim, which turned every way to guard the way of the tree of life from the approach of our fallen parents. Examples are adduced and warnings given, from all the varieties of human character and conduct, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Hitherto, in following the march of Israel through the wilderness, we have been called to mourn over the iniquity of the *people*. The scene must now be changed, in a single instance; and, instead of regarding the *rulers* of the

chosen heritage, as men more sinned against, than sinning, we behold Moses and Aaron, the prophet, and the priest, the leader, and the saint of God, overpowered by temptation, and falling into transgression.

Eight and thirty years had the hosts of Israel drank water from the rock in Horeb, which followed and refreshed them, in all their weary pilgrimage. The supply was now withdrawn—either, because the stream had fallen into the Red Sea, at their last encampment near Ezion-Geber, or, because water might now be obtained without a miracle. They certainly lacked it not during their remaining journey, until they drank in safety and plenty from the springs of the promised land.[1] This most necessary gift of divine providence was, however, withheld from the people for a little season, during their abode in Kadesh; probably as a trial of their faith, and, that it might be known, whether the present generation resembled their fathers, who had perished in the wilderness. Brief, however, as the experiment was, it served to shew, that as Adam, after his fall begat a son in his own likeness of iniquity, so the children of the smitten Israelites resembled their parents, in that spirit of murmuring, dis-

[1] See Bishop Patrick's Commentary on Numb. xx. 2.

content, and ingratitude which had provoked the wrath of God to destroy them. It served, moreover, as a sad occasion of sin, to Moses and Aaron; and it brought upon them, from the impartial justice of God, the sentence of exclusion from the promised land. The command is given, the disobedience, and its punishment registered, for our instruction. May the Spirit of God apply and bless the record to our souls! Omitting many particulars, to which our attention might be directed, I consider the history as more especially leading us to examine

I. The Offence of Moses and Aaron.

II. The Award of God against them.

Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, and the prophetess of Israel, had gone down to the grave in Kadesh, like a shock of corn, ripe in its season, after a life prolonged to an hundred and thirty years. At the time, when Moses was doubtless much afflicted by her loss, the supply from Horeb failed, and there was no water for the people. Such a privation called into exercise all the latent rebellion of their hearts. "They gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron, and the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God, that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord. And why have ye

brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink." As usual, Moses and Aaron betook themselves to God. His glory appeared in their behalf. "And the Lord spake to Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water; and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation, and their beasts drink." The command was obeyed, the rod was taken from before the Lord; and the congregation was assembled near the rock, on which the miracle should be wrought. "And Moses said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also." Where then, it will, perhaps, be inquired, was the sin of Moses, and whence the indignation of God? There is little on the surface of this transaction to mark the prophet's conduct with an impress

of guilt and rebellion. But "the Lord seeth not as man seeth." It is his prerogative to search the heart, and judge the motive of every action.

We have, however, sufficient evidence to ascertain the offence of the man of God, and to vindicate the punishment with which it was repaid.

I. View the offence with reference *to the Israelites,* and judge, whether it did not look towards them with an aspect of injurious tendency? Moses was placed among them, as a city set upon a hill, to exhibit an illustrious pattern of meekness, faith, and patience, and to call upon the people in the hour of trial, to be still, and know that Jehovah was God. Instead of such a manifestation of the power of religion, we behold him exhibiting an undue and causeless anger. "Hear now, ye rebels." He had used this term on other occasions; but in a chastised and gentle spirit. That he was zealous for his God cannot be doubted; and that as the fire kindled he spake accordingly, is equally evident. But it was the strange flame of an unhallowed burning. It resembled the mistaken zeal of the brethren, who would have called down fire from heaven upon the village that denied entrance and rest to their wearied Saviour. *Israel provoked his spirit, so*

that he spake unadvisedly with his lips. Alas, we know not what manner of spirit we are of! The wrath of man, however sacred the cause in which it may be excited, worketh not the righteousness of God. His great and glorious cause can never want the assistance of that warmth which is untempered by love, and of that zeal which occupies the mind, to the exclusion of some measure of that patience and long-suffering, which are continually exercised by God, in all his dealings with sinful men. *God is love. He who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* In such a spirit should every member of the family above stand forward, to defend the honour of his heavenly Father. That is the only justifiable reproof which is administered with the mind that was in Christ Jesus, who, while he condemned sin in the flesh, came filled with holy love for sinners. He bore with their contradiction. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth uprightly." He prayed for his murderers, on the cross; and his purchased salvation, among its first acts of mercy, on the day of pentecost, converted above three thousand of those who had been instrumental in crucifying the Lord of glory. Behold then, O Christian, thy propitiation, in "the

Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world!" Behold thy pattern, in that meek and lowly Saviour, who hath invited thee to learn of him! Few temptations are more dangerous to magistrates, and ministers of religion, than that which prompts them to address offenders in anger, instead of endeavouring "to restore such in the spirit of meekness." Nor, do occasions often arise to their experience, in which they will not find it needful to offer up the Psalmist's prayer, *Set a watch, O Lord, upon my mouth, and keep the door of my lips. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.*

Hitherto the people had beheld in Moses the meekest man upon the face of the earth; a man whom no wrongs, no contumely, no scorn, could rouse to indignation. Sorrow he had often felt, when he saw the obdurate rebellion with which they provoked God. But that sorrow led him to plead in their behalf, and to intercede for them, that they died not. Alas, "how is the gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed!" That heart which once bore Israel upon it, in prayer to the throne of God, is now filled with wrath against the congregation. That voice which never spake to them, or of them, except in tenderness and love, is now loud in

reproach and wrath. Moses should be an ensample, to the flock. How, if they follow it? How, if his rank, his high standing in religion, his nearness to the counsels, his acquaintance with the divine mysteries should sanctify his anger in their regard, and make them imagine it lawful to imitate him? Would to God, that all men who are placed in high situations were visited with a spirit of reflection, and would consider the present and eternal consequences which may follow from their ensample! Would to God, that those especially, who have felt the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit, would remember, that sinners will fortify themselves in iniquity, by the authority of their failure, be encouraged to defy God, and bring condemnation upon themselves by the habitual commission of sin for which they will plead and magnify the least departure of a Christian from the law of his God, and the mind of his Saviour. The authority of example and influence is one of the most formidable hindrances to a young pilgrim, in his way from darkness to light, and from Satan to God. As the sails of the ship may be filled with a favourable wind, while the rapidity of the current arrests her progress, so may the heart be much occupied by holy desires, while worldly opinion, and the sanction which professing Christians afford to evil by thoughtlessness

and sin, may greatly prevent its access to God, and detain it in the conflict of uncertainty between earth and heaven. It should be the desire of every man's heart who feels his weight of obligation to the Saviour, as the author of his redemption and his hope, to address all who see him—not indeed in the high mindedness of a pharisaical language, but in the silent pleading of a holy, consistent, blameless life, *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.*

(2.) If the conduct of Moses and Aaron, (for both were implicated,) be now considered *with reference to God,* it assumes a darker hue of transgression.

It was marked by a hasty and petulant disobedience. God had indeed commanded Moses to take the wonder-working rod in his hand, as a symbol of that almighty power which was to accompany his command to the rock in Kadesh: but the prophet has no direction *to smite with it,* as when he first performed the miracle in Rephidim. His commission is plainly given. "Speak unto the rock, and it shall give forth its water." He should merely have addressed the rock; but he smites it with the rod. He had no authority to speak to the congregation; but he chides them sternly and unkindly. He is therefore guilty of the sin of disobedience. He violates a divine precept. "He left undone that

which he ought to have done; and he did that which he ought not to have done." "Ye rebelled against my commandment, in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes."[1] Vainly shall we profess religion,—vainly assert our hope in the cross, our adoration of the nature, our regard for the word, our delight in the law of Jesus Christ,—vainly shall we each cry, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," unless our affection abide the test of obedience. *If ye love me, keep my commandments. Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?* The Christian's walk is along a narrow way. He neither must turn to the right hand, nor to the left. His obedience must be universal, unvarying, and entire. He must set the Lord alway before him, having respect to all the divine commandments. And the more plainly he has become the mark of observation, the more cautiously should he endeavour to adorn the doctrine of his Saviour in all things: "that others may behold his good works, and glorify God in the day of their visitation."

Unbelief and sin are inseparable companions, united to each other as necessarily as cause to

[1] Numbers xxvii. 14.

consequence. We might therefore be prepared to expect *that distrust of God,* which is so briefly, but so emphatically, described in the history. Moses and Aaron approached the Lord in doubt and sorrow. He had cheered them by word and sign. His glory had appeared in their behalf. He had commanded their duty, and promised to bless its performance with success. Moses was ordered to address the rock; and, it was declared, that, in obedience to his word, water should gush forth abundantly. Had God then promised, and would he not do it; had he spoken, and would he not make it good? Was it for one, who had witnessed so many and so stupendous manifestations of divine power, so many confirmations of divine faithfulness, and so many interferences of divine goodness, to doubt, that the word of the Lord should be accomplished? Yet were Moses and Aaron expressly charged with believing not God, to sanctify him in the eyes of the children of Israel. If ever experience were warrant for the exercise of faith, they should have been the last to distrust the omnipotence, or the truth of God. The prophet especially, should have felt himself secure of success; as did the great apostle, when, conscious of the presence and might of his Saviour, he exclaimed, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

"They that know thy name, O Lord, will put their trust in thee." Moses should have been assured, that no mercy could be denied him, when the miraculous rod was in his hand, and when he might plead the power and kindness of the Lord whose purposes it had so often effected. He should have taken it from its place in the sanctuary, as David the sword of Goliath, which he had already proved, and of which he cried, "There is none like that, give it me." If the leader of Israel staggered, through unbelief, at the promise, he might have been reassured by remembering former miracles; as the Saviour reasoned with his disciples; "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very work's sake." But with the promise and the rod united, Moses distrusted the Lord. He smote the rock, it rebuked his unbelief by giving forth no water.— He therefore repeated the blow, with that impatience of success which invariably accompanies unbelief, and which refuses to wait the time, when the Most High shall interfere to fulfil his word and redeem his pledge.

Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. If ye had no proofs of his goodness, in mereies past, no ground for reliance upon his word for those you need, distrust would be less

criminal. Ye would then be required, with all the weakness of your nature, and all the anxiety of your desire for the expected good, simply to rely upon an unconfirmed declaration, and to repose upon the incomprehensible attribute of the fidelity of God. But, while providences have crowded every day around you, in proof that the Lord is good and gracious,—while the Saviour declares from his cross, how infinitely God loved the world,—and while you possess a covenant of redemption, ordered in all things and sure, can the guilt of unbelief be small and venial? Will it not rather debar you from an interest in the promised and offered mercy? All Christian blessings are appropriated to the soul by faith. What avails it to him who is perishing in the waters, that the rainbow extends its glory over the heavens, and declares that a deluge shall never again overspread the earth? And to what end does the rainbow of a Saviour's love encompass the eternal throne, proclaiming the pardon bought upon Calvary for repenting believers, to him who lives and dies an unbeliever? Beware, lest your infidelity should provoke God to leave you to its tremendous consequences. Be induced by the unchangeableness of his word, and by the remembrance of his goodness, to "Cast all your care on him, for he careth for you." Be not faithless but believing. Surely

the great apostle himself had no more cause, than any sincere Christian may also possess, for saying, *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* Beholding near you every foundation of confidence for the soul, how justly may the faithful and true witness rebuke your unhallowed distrust? *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

It is difficult moreover, to acquit Moses and Aaron of dishonouring the Most High in this transaction, *by assuming that power which solely and exclusively belonged to him.* "Hear now, ye rebels, must WE fetch you water out of this rock." As though the word of almighty power could not effect the miracle: or, as though the weak and sinful instrument had the merit of its accomplishment. As though the arm of Moses, because it wielded the miraculous rod, was to bring forth the stream from the rock; while the arm of Jehovah were no more equal to the task, than an infant's strength, and a brittle reed would have been to remove the rock from its place. The same pride of man would still usurp the unalienable prerogative of God. It would either seek the supply of its necessities, independent of omnipotence, and the security of its salvation, without being indebted to the atone-

ment, intercession, and imparted sanctification of the Son of God,—or, when it professes to apply to him, it would come in the self-sufficiency of the Laodicean church. Without reflecting upon the utter destitution of all spiritual strength, arising from our natural death in trespasses and sins, and overlooking the gracious provision which the Father offers in the full redemption of his Son, we smite the rock in our own strength. We would willingly be persuaded that we may usurp the office of the appointed Mediator, and become to ourselves "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Such a state of sinful independence, such a rebellion of the soul against its Saviour, the voice of God is raised to condemn, in every page of the gospel. *Without me ye can do nothing. Not by might, nor by power; but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts.* He only hath the mind of that Spirit, who, while he feels the principles of a divine life active within him, ascribes the glory where alone it is due. *Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

II. THE DIVINE AWARD against the iniquity of this transaction strongly exemplifies the manner in which our heavenly Father dispenses the riches of his mercy, in harmony with his character as the moral governor of the world.

(1.) *He administered to the necessities of*

Israel. Their guilty murmurs had provoked the impatience of Moses and Aaron, and were the root of bitterness, from which their sin proceeded. But he who spareth, when we deserve punishment, and in his wrath remembers mercy, was unwilling to smite both the shepherds and the flock. Now the flock must perish, if water were not given to their need. He, therefore, who desires to overcome evil with good, pitied their necessities; and the rock, though smitten in rebellious unbelief by Moses, gave forth a copious stream, at which all the thousands of the congregation drank, and their beasts also. The living waters of salvation, in like manner, gush forth from Christ, and spring up unto everlasting life, for the need of a sinful, thankless, dying world. And the voice of eternal mercy cries to each individual, *Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*

(2.) "As dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, so doth a little folly, him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour." The more exalted the station of Moses and Aaron, and the more extensive their influence, the less did it consist with the divine honour to pass by their transgression, unvisited by punishment.

It fared ill, therefore, with them for the sin of Israel. The Lord spake unto them, saying,

"Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Our heavenly Father is no respecter of persons. Neither the rank of the brethren, their prophetic, nor their priestly office, could shield them from wrath. The very privileges they enjoyed rather exposed them to a greater measure of divine indignation, by being misapplied and abused. Moses might, indeed, conduct the hosts of Israel to the very confines of the promised land. He might ascend Mount Nebo, and cast his eye over the glories of Canaan: but he must die, short of its possession, in the wilderness, and be gathered to his fathers, on this side Jordan. That he felt the punishment, as an awful visitation, and mourned over it as a manifestation of that anger which he had provoked, and as the disappointment of his best earthly hopes, we are assured from the earnestness with which he intreated to have the sentence repealed. "O Lord God.... I pray thee let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan; that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." But the Lord was wroth, and would not hear him. "Let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this matter." Eleven months after this period, he died, and was buried in the

land of Moab. Aaron had still a more brief probation. The very next march conducted the Israelites to Mount Hor, where Moses stripped Aaron of the priestly garments, transferred the office of the priesthood to Eleazar, and then witnessed the death of his brother and fellow-servant in the camp of God. In the last hour of life, how greatly must the remembrance of his transgression have weighed upon the mind of Aaron, and placed a dark cloud between his soul and the comfort of God's presence within it! He who would die, with all his covenant evidences in their brightness and integrity, must walk by faith, like Enoch, and find it Christ to live, like Paul. Sin assuredly draws a separation between the heart, and its peace, hope, joy, trust, assurance in the Saviour. Would ye, then, my brethren, fear no evil, when you tread the dark valley of the shadow of death? Would ye possess the rod, and staff, and arm, and love of omnipotence to comfort you? Hold you fast by God; and avoid all the occasions of sin. Fear ye especially, *lest a promise being made you of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* "How loudly does this history testify, that you have to do with a righteous and holy God, who will not endure sin, even in the most distinguished of his ser-

vants. Though he should forgive, yet will he not wholly spare. He may so pardon the iniquity, as not to inflict eternal punishment upon the offender, and yet he may severely visit his transgression. He acts thus, in order to prevent any abuse of his grace; to vindicate the holiness of his nature, and his law; to excite watchfulness and prayer among his servants; and to warn the impenitent, that so iniquity may not be their ruin."[1] Flee, then, from sin, as from a serpent. Consider, that one offence —one apparently slight offence, though it excluded not Moses and Aaron from the rest of the land of promise in heaven, condemned them to die in the wilderness, and deprived them of blessings, to which they had looked forward through forty years of toil, and pain, and wandering. Commit your way to God, that ye may avoid such a visitation; and, remembering, that sin walks hand in hand with sorrow, beseech him whose grace is Almighty, to take you into his keeping: and join the fervour of the Psalmist's prayer, *Hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not: hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.*

[1] Bradley's Sermons, Vol. I. p. 196.

Among the many inferences which crowd upon my mind in reviewing this history, I will only beseech you to consider *the unspeakable value of Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of sinners.* If ever man among the members of the ancient church walked humbly and zealously with God, that man was surely Moses. Yet so severely did the very law, of which he was the mediator judge of all transgression—so unequivocally did it denounce the sentence of death against every iniquity, that because, under strong provocation, he spake unadvisedly with his lips, he was utterly excluded from the earthly Canaan. The law makes no allowance for infirmity, or ignorance; for omissions of duty, or partial performance. It declares, that *the wages of sin is death.* It erects a standard of obedience, which man, in his fallen, guilty nature, can never reach: and, by the deeds of the law can no flesh be justified. Nay, Aaron himself, who though not the mediator, was the high priest of the law, was condemned to pay, with his life, the penalty of its violation. Zeal for its honour, regularity in its ordinances, punctilious regard to its sacrifices, failed to justify him for one violation. Aaron himself must prove, that *he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all.* Who, then, may

hope to establish a claim of legal righteousness in the sight of a just and holy God, when Moses and Aaron die beneath the sentence of the law, for an apparently slight transgression. The condemnation of the law is pointed against every child of Adam. What then must we do to be saved? *O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and goodness of God!* A Saviour is sent, who fulfilled the requirement, and underwent the dreadful penalty of the law, by the death of the cross. *There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.* Will ye attempt to establish a justification of your own? While the law denounces the vengeance of an angry God, while his love has opened in Christ Jesus a fountain for sin, and for uncleanness, in the laver of his blood—while the voice of judgment thunders upon Sinai; and the voice of mercy speaks from Calvary, in accents transcending the sweetness of the harps of heaven, will ye reject the salvation of him who loves you, and offers to wash you from your sins, in his own blood? Will ye not rather renounce the desperate expectation of entering heaven by that stern law which condemned Moses and Aaron, its minister and priest? Will ye not count all things but loss,

that ye may win Christ, and be found in him, not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness that is of God by faith?

SERMON IX.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

NUMBERS XXI. 8, 9.

The Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived.

In that important conversation which opened the secrets of the kingdom of heaven to the astonished mind of Nicodemus, two subjects were especially pressed upon his attention:— the necessity of a new birth unto holiness, by water and the Spirit of God, and the appointed method of salvation through faith in a crucified Redeemer. He who subsequently said, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of

me," addressed a similar reference to the master of Israel. He directed his attention to the brazen serpent, as a remarkable type of himself, and of the deliverance which he should effect for a dying world, by his suffering on the cross. *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*[1] We have now arrived at this significant event in the history of Israel: and with the plain unequivocal appropriation made of it by our blessed Lord to himself, we are not only permitted, but in mere consistency obliged, to compare the type with the antitype —the transaction with its spiritual application, by noticing

I. THE MALADY WITH WHICH THE ISRAELITES WERE AFFLICTED.

II. THE REMEDY WITH WHICH THEY WERE PROVIDED.

After the sin of Israel had been rebuked by the sentence of exclusion from the promised land, pronounced against Moses and Aaron, and already executed upon the latter, the people had requested permission to pass through the country of their kinsmen the Edomites, as the

[1] John iii. 14, 15.

nearest way to Canaan. The favour however, was churlishly denied them; aud they were thus obliged to return from mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, in order to compass the land of Edom. By this carnal, impatient, discontented people, such a necessity would be regarded as a harsh dealing on the part of God. "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." In addition to this trial, the scarcity of water seems not to have been removed. They grew weary also of the food which descended from heaven. "There is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread." In this perverse and daring spirit they spake against God, and against Moses, saying, "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness." But even the forbearance of divine mercy has its limit. Even the long suffering of a gracious God towards sinners may be wearied; and he may be provoked to visit them with his strange, though dreadful work of judgment. The honour of his character, the vindication of his moral government, the interests of his church, may unite to call for wrath and justice upon impenitent offenders. In this manner do sinners now "despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth them to re-

pentance: but after their hardness and impenitent heart treasure up unto themselves wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Such then, were the circumstances under which an awful visitation befel the guilty people of the Most High. *The particular character of the judgment* is full of warning and instruction. "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died." No doubt these terrible destroyers had infested the wilderness long before the Israelites passed through it: but the protecting arm of God had restrained them from entering the camp. The pillar of the cloud and of fire had defended the Israelites from their venom, and even from their approach. That protection was now withdrawn; and the serpents were sent by God to do their work of death amidst the guilty thousands of the congregation. Their terrible character is briefly, but emphatically described—the Lord sent *fiery* serpents. Their very aspect resembled the fierceness of a devouring flame. The poison with which they were filled appeared in their outward form: and the effects produced by their bite, made the wretched sufferer feel as though the current of his blood were changed into tides of fire in his veins, producing the anguish of intolerable thirst and fever. This min-

istration of death was committed to *flying* serpents, from whose attacks there was no escape, whom no swiftness could avoid, no defence exclude. When once they had found their victim, and inflicted their wound, *the whole head became sick, and the whole heart faint: from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there was no soundness, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.* Life was corrupted at the fountain: the blood ran polluted from the heart, and spread its defilement over the whole frame, until the sufferer sank beneath his malady; and much people of Israel died.

Behold then, the similitude of that serpent who aimed at the life of man, from the beginning, and whose venom has slain, even to the second and everlasting death, so many thousands of our race. *Sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* The justice of an offended God has permitted Satan and his ministers of ruin to go abroad among mankind. The fiery serpents are allowed to put forth their malignity; and to exert their efforts to destroy us for ever. The poison attacks the heart, corrupts it wholly, makes it "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." If the dreadful disease, with which sin would destroy the life of our souls be permitted to continue its

ravage, and no other remedy be provided, than that which we are able to furnish and apply for ourselves, we must die beyond the reach of hope. The winged serpents could not more triumphantly choose their point of attack among the wretched Israelites, than Satan, with all his temptations can find entrance into our minds and affections, to cherish the malignity of the besetting sin, until we feel it burning with some foretaste of the fire that never shall be quenched. *The sting of death is sin.* The very words of Jesus Christ, in which he declares himself the only, but almighty remedy for this disease, prove, that man, in his fallen guilty state, is in perishing circumstances; and, if the remedy be not discovered and applied, must die, and die for ever. O, what a dreary scene of woe and mourning must have been witnessed among the tribes and habitations of Israel, while the serpents were inflicting wounds as incurable, as they were irresistible by human agency! Immeasurably more awful is the view taken by a believer in revelation of the scene around him, in which the serpent stings, the venom ferments in the soul; and, if the one only remedy be rejected, the sufferers cannot be saved. *Lust when it is conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* One difference indeed remains. The Israelite knew that

he was bitten. The consuming fever within him bore its dreadful testimony to his danger, and made him flee to every remedy which medicine might possibly furnish, and skill suggest. He alas, whose soul has been bitten by the serpent, and within whom the poison of unpardoned and unmortified sin is doing its sad office, feels not the sting or the smart; but sleeps and slumbers on, in mournful insensibility of his peril. Thus as men are said to be fanned, and cooled, and kept in undisturbed repose, by that bird of prey, which, all the time, feeds upon their blood. Because we hear not the cry of an individual starting up from his destructive rest, and crying, "What must I do to be saved?" is it any proof that the work of death is not going forward in his soul? Far otherwise. It was no proof, that Jonah was an obedient prophet, a righteous servant of God, when he went down into the sides of the ship, and lay, and was fast asleep. It was no proof, that all was well with David, when his conscience slept in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. It was no proof, that God had not departed from Sampson, when his hair was shorn and his strength taken away, as he slumbered in the lap of Dalilah. Such states of insensibility rather furnish mournful evidence that men are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; and, though far departed from God, from hope,

from mercy, are yet crying, "Peace, peace," regardless of their distance and insensible of their danger. Never will those persons be in the way of recovery, until the convincing spirit of God shall shake off the stupor into which they are cast, and cry to one, "What meanest thou, O sleeper, arise, call upon thy God;" to another, "Thou art the man;" to a third, "The Philistines are upon thee"—and to every one of the secure and thoughtless slumberers, *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

Such was, in its measure and degree, the salutary alarm of these wretched Israelites. Their enemies were resistless, themselves subdued and helpless. The deaths of Kibroth-Hattaavah were repeated, and the graves of lust were again opened to receive them. No help, no hope, appeared among them. They fled therefore, to their only refuge. "They came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee: pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us; and Moses prayed for the people." Never yet did the prayer of such a mediation ascend to God, unheard and unaccepted. "The Lord will judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone." "Israel cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and

he delivered them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands asunder." There was a balm in Gilead; there was a great physician there. One was among them who could heal the wound of his people, and restore those on whom the hand of death was already laid. "He was very gracious unto them, at the voice of their cry, when he heard it, he answered them," and wrought an astonishing deliverance in their behalf.

II. THE REMEDY which we have now to examine, was no less effectual in its operation, and significant in its character, than the malady which it was intended to remove.

The Lord made a full provision for the need of Israel. "He said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole: and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived." Surely this is a wonderful transaction. Surely this is a mode of repairing the mischief, so mysterious, that the mind is thrown back upon itself, and baffled in every attempt to fathom or explain the difficulty. A serpent of brass to heal the wound which the rankling

venom of the living serpent had occasioned! Was not this indeed a mockery of sorrow; or at least, the inefficacious prescription of the physician, when he leaves his patient hopelessly to die? Hath God indeed gifted the herbs and minerals of the earth with their powers of healing; and cannot the comprehensive range of his wisdom discover in one of *them* a specific for the deadly visitation? Is not his arm almighty—are not all the stores of earth at his disposal; or cannot he who created it create also something more and thus administer relief? Nay, is he not now contradicting the spirit of his own command, and erecting an image, when he had previously forbidden his people "to make to themselves the likeness of any thing in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth?" Thus would the voice of infidelity whisper among the children of Israel. Thus would unbelievers, blind as they are, presumptuously limit the mind of eternal wisdom, and fetter the free hand of the Almighty. No common remedy was to be applied. The serpents were not to be removed; their venom not to be extracted; their mouths not to be closed. They were still permitted to infest the camp, and bite the people. Moses, by the divine command, merely formed a resemblance of these dreadful serpents, and set it up upon a pole in the sight

of all the people. It was made in all things like the original, except in its powers of life and mischief.

Such was the spiritual condition of man, when God the Father made that astonishing display of mercy, that inconceivable interference of wisdom, which types prefigured, prophecies foretold, and his incarnate Son consummated upon the cross. *When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so was the Son of man lifted up in the agony of his crucifixion. Is it admitted by any enquirer, that the world was defiled by iniquity, and under sentence of death from the just award of an injured God? And yet, is that enquirer lost in amazement, that in man's extremity, and God's opportunity, such a scheme of salvation should have been devised, as was revealed in the gospel by the death of Christ? Is it asked, Where is the analogy between the remedy and the disease? Could not the universal governor and monarch of the world have adopted some method of glorifying himself, and saving sinners, more intelligible, and apparently more fitting, than the great mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh?" We have no other answer to make, than by expressing the scriptural conviction, that this interference on man's

behalf is stamped with characters of wisdom so radiant, that the very angels who inhabit the rest of heaven, and share the knowledge which is reflected to them in such intensity by their nearness to the throne of light, "desire to look into these things." Whether any other method of saving the perishing world of sinners, and yet of harmonizing and glorifying the divine perfections could have originated in the mind of the Most High is equally vain and sinful to enquire. This we do know, and if we be the redeemed of Jesus Christ it will be the well-spring of our bliss for ever, that the Christian scheme emanated from the unsearchable riches of our father's love. *Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die: but God commended his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. God so loved the world,*—as the Saviour himself declares, immediately after appropriating this miracle to himself,—*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but should have everlasting life.* This also we know, that he by whom this scheme of mercy was fulfilled is "Christ, the wisdom of God." This we moreover know, that he who had the Holy Spirit and saw the secrets of the blessed in his unutterable rapture,

has exclaimed concerning the mystery of redemption, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* The serpents are not removed! Sin is still permitted to sting: and if the sufferer continue proud or careless, to destroy—but a remedy is provided. The appointed deliverer takes the nature that had offended, and that, if he save it not, must die for the offence. *God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* It is thus manifested, that the deliverance wrought for man is as much independent of his co-operation, as it is above his comprehension. It was not more apparent that the cure of the dying thousands of Israel, after the abandonment of every other hope, was the sole work of God, than his exclusive agency is proved by the scheme of life and mercy revealed in the everlasting gospel. That voice came to the Israelite whose rebellion was punished, but whose wound was healed, which comes to every transgressor whom the law condemns, and wrath pursues, but whom the infinite compassions of God have been exerted to save through the cross of his Son. *Thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help.*

"Men and brethren unto you is the word of this salvation sent." God looked, and there was no man; therefore his own arm brought redemption, and so brought it, that every reflecting man with the words of life and wisdom in his hand, must surely say, "This hath God done;" for he must perceive that it is his work.

The Most High was not contented merely to provide a deliverance and cure for his people. He gave them also *a most simple, but most comprehensive and infallible mode of using it to their healing*. "It shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live." The serpent stood on high among the people, like the royal banner of an ancient army, where every eye among the dying thousands could behold it. The sufferer might lie in his agony at the uttermost limit of the congregation, where he could hardly distinguish the mysterious sign of his recovery. He might have been long bitten. He might have tried in vain every method of cure, until the poison had taken strong possession of his frame, and marked him out for the grave. His eye might be already glazed and dim with the approaching darkness of death: but if, under any of these threatening, or even apparently desperate circumstances, he looked to the brazen serpent, with a persuasion, that God had ordered it as

the means of safety, the venom was forthwith expelled, and he lived. A mysterious virtue went forth from God, as a blessing upon the institution, and the dying Israelite was made whole.

And what saith the gospel record concerning Jesus Christ, the great antitype of the serpent in the wilderness? That as Moses lifted up the one on its pole, for the cure of Israel, so the determinate counsel of God exalted the other on the cross, that whosoever believeth, or looketh in faith on him, should not perish, but have eternal life. *Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins.* If the Israelite refused to look on the type, he died without remedy. If the transgressor reject the antitype, he puts salvation from him, turns his back upon the revealed mercy of God, and dies in his sin. Behold, then, the appointment of the Most High, for your redemption. Regard Him who is the resurrection from the death of sin, and the life, temporal, spiritual, and eternal of the soul. Hear the voice which cries, *He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.* The sting of sin is universally felt. Equally universal is the mean of deliverance.

This is the will of Him who sent the Saviour, "that every one which seeth him, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and that Christ may raise him up at the last day." There is no limit to the mighty efficacy of this redemption. *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.* One tied, bound, and pierced through, with the chain of his sins, and the iron that hath entered his soul, is far distant (as he thinks), from the appointed sign, even at the extremity of the camp of God. May he cast his eye thither, over such an extent of separation, and regard the crucified Saviour with hope as well as faith? He may, indeed. *Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.* Another has long remained under the destructive influence of the fiery serpent. The wound which sin has made has been deepened by habit, and he seems to cry in vain, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Is not his case beyond the reach of help? It is not. That invitation which the Saviour once spake, the Spirit still pleads. *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Another may have passed through the greatest part of life, with all its years of responsibility, and all its means of mercy, under the benumbing influence of the serpent's bite; and be treading the verge

of the eternal world, in age or sickness, with a step only between him and death. What is his condition, what his ground of hope? It is the infinite efficacy of the cross. It is the immutable fidelity of the promise of God. It is the all-sufficient power of him, who once said to the dying malefactor, when he cast himself, in faith and penitence upon his mercy, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." My dear brethren, be your spiritual condition what it may, your hindrances ever so formidable, your difficulties ever so great, the atonement of the cross provides a remedy for all. Not an Israelite, whatever might be the peculiarity, or the extremity of his case, died, if he earnestly looked to the symbol of his deliverance. And the free declaration is made to every one that seeks the salvation of the Son of God; *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. If thou canst believe, all things are possible unto him that believeth.* Such is the promise—what shall be your answer? Shall it not be, "*Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*"

But were not the men of Israel permitted to unite with the healing sign of the brazen serpent some medicine of their own device, which might assist the operation of the appointed remedy? Impossible. Such an association would have contradicted the plan of goodness, and

dishonoured alike the mercy and wisdom of God. Neither must he who looks for the salvation of Jesus Christ attempt to add any thing of his own to the full and perfect efficacy of the cross. Let that man who feels the evil and danger of unrepented and of unpardoned transgression, betake himself to the Saviour alone, who will not give his glory to another. The conditions are absolute, the terms beyond imagination gracious: but the author of this salvation is strictly jealous of his honour. *Look, unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside me there is no Saviour.* To despond of other help is to take the first step to the life of faith in Christ Jesus. *They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. The Son of Man is come to seek, and to save that which was lost.* Such is that gracious doctrine of Christ crucified, which it is our duty and privilege to preach to you as the unspeakable gift of a compassionate God.

Allow me, however, to guard the subject by two or three brief remarks in conclusion.

(1.) Observe, that not only faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, but *repentance also towards God* is essential to every man who looks for the mercy of the only Saviour, unto eternal life. The serpent was not provided until the Israelites saw their sin, acknowledged its

evil, and cried unto the Lord through the mediation of Moses. Impenitence, and justification by the cross, have no more connexion with each other, than Belial with Christ. Would you, indeed, be saved? Pray, that you may know, dread, abhor, and abjure, the exceeding sinfulness of sin. We would direct your eyes to the Son of Man, lifted up on the cross; as Moses bade the people look upon the serpent of brass, and live. But ye must come, weary and heavy laden, with your burden, if ye hope to be received and pardoned. If ye live in the wilful commission of any sin, embrace it in your affection, and cherish it in your heart, ye are yet uninterested in the cross of Jesus Christ. As respects you, he is hitherto dead in vain. Mourn over your transgressions; desire freedom from their bondage; and then, with humble boldness draw near to Jesus, saying, *Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean.* And fear not a repulse from him who stretched forth his hands to the imploring leper, saying, *I will, be thou clean: and immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

(2.) I cannot too frequently, or too solemnly declare, that our deliverance from the condemnation and death of sin, can be testified only by the practical evidence of a growing sanctification. How was the cure of the bitten Israel-

ites proved, when they had looked in faith to the serpent of brass? Was it by their continuance in pain, in helplessness, in insufficiency, to perform every work and duty of life? Did they lie where their wounds had cast them down, and where the poison had drained their strength? No; they arose from the ground; they proved that their cure was no delusion, by returning to their duties, and resuming their march toward Canaan. Here, then, is the test of deliverance from the death of sin. Whom the blood of the cross justifieth, them the Spirit of God sanctifieth. They are translated from the bondage of corruption. A principle of spiritual health, a new life, energy, and vigour are infused into the soul. All sloth is shaken off; and the renewed man, rejoicing in his unwonted powers and desires, presses forward, with delighted alacrity, in the way of God's commandments. Would this deliverance encourage the Israelites to sloth or presumption? Surely not. And shall he who feels himself redeemed to God by the death of his Son, continue in the practice of any sin, known or wilful. *He cannot sin, because he is born of God* "The love of Christ constrains him;" and he manifests the reality of the blessed change produced within him, "not in word and in tongue only, but in deed, and in truth." *If any man*

be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new. By their fruits ye shall know them.

(3.) We are remarkably instructed by this history, *that the gospel of redemption could never have originated in human sagacity.* "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." A plan like that for healing the bitten Israelites in the wilderness, would never have occurred to Moses, nor to any of the multitudes within the camp. There was no relation, no apparent connexion between the malady, and the cure—no adoption of natural means—no exhibition of human skill and science. A serpent was raised on a pole; the sufferer must regard it in simple faith, as the means of his deliverance; and, looking thus upon it, live. Even so, Christ crucified, in every period of the church, has been, to the carnal, sensual Jew, a stumbling-block; and to the refined, philosophizing Greek, foolishness: while to them who humbly and simply believe, through the gift of faith, bestowed by the Holy Spirit, he is "Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." How can these things be? is the scornful inquiry of the mere reasoner in religion, when the great mysteries of salvation by the cross, are proposed to his notice and ac-

ceptance. Thus argued Naaman the leper, when the prophet bade him wash in Jordan seven times, and be clean. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel; may I not wash in them, and be clean?" Had he thus continued to resist the direction of the man of God, he had returned to Syria a leper still, and had died in his pollution. Shall we reject the doctrine of the cross, deny the Lord who bought us, and oppose ourselves to the purposes of his love, because we cannot understand the whole process of the gospel redemption; and because the voice of God speaks concerning its mysteries, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter?" Go ye, amidst your doubts and difficulties, to the giver of all wisdom, that ye may ascertain your need of mercy, and the power and willingness of the Son of God to save to the uttermost. Such a disclosure is the exclusive work of his Spirit. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father in heaven." Rest not, until you can each say, in the fulness of the heart, *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.* And remember the mournful alternative, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

(4.) It is an awful consideration, *that even the doctrine of free salvation by the cross of Christ may be abused to the peril and ruin of the souls of men.* The brazen serpent, the symbol of cure to so many Israelites, was preserved with pious care by the chosen heritage. But even the serpent became an occasion of sin in after days; so that the holy zeal of Hezekiah, for the honour of his God, brake it in pieces, as an idol, which withdrew the hearts of his people from their allegiance to Jehovah. O beware, lest ye imitate this sin, and pervert the grace of God, in his Son. Preserve, indeed, a memory of his love, filled with adoring gratitude. But reflect, how mournful is the spiritual state how dark the spiritual hope, how utterly vain the refuge of that man, who, professing a reverence for his Saviour, bows down in the idolatry of Antinomianism to the cross of Jesus, while he rebels against the law of God, which that very cross was intended to magnify. Avoid the delusion, escape the danger. *Shall you sin because you are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!*

SERMON X.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF BALAAM.

NUMBERS XXIII. 10.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

CONSISTENCY is the perfection of character. Like all other excellencies, however, it is no less rare than valuable. Contradictions between the conduct of men and the principles, by which it is obviously their interest to be governed, are so frequent, that although they may grieve, they cannot surprize an attentive observer. Of this kind was the policy of the Midianites, when the children of Israel encamped near them, on the plains of Moab. Like the chosen tribes, they were descended from Abraham. Moses had been hospitably received by Jethro their priest, whose flock he had kept forty years in the wilderness, and whose daughter he had married. Jethro him-

self had sojourned in the tents of Israel, and witnessed the miraculous manner in which the people were guarded, fed, and conducted, on their march toward Canaan. If community of illustrious origin presented a powerful motive for seeking the alliance of a mighty and victorious nation—if the privileges of the covenant people of God were desirable objects of attainment, the Midianites should have made common cause with the men of Israel. But they willingly resigned these distinctions, to strike an unholy league with Moab, and to bring Balaam from Mesopotamia, as a man of mighty influence over the powers of the invisible world; in order, that after he had solemnly devoted the heritage of the Most High to destruction, according to the custom of ancient nations, they might prevail against it, and smite it utterly.

Equally inconsistent is the conduct of Balaam. In many respects it is necessarily peculiar, because his precise situation has never been paralleled. But the principles by which he was actuated, are still common in the world. We may therefore be assisted through the labyrinth of doubt and difficulty, in which his behaviour is involved, by examining the state of his mind, and tracing him through some of the paths that led to the sins of which he was

guilty, and to the punishment by which he was overtaken.

I. When Simon, the magician, between whose character, and that of Balaam, there exists a remarkable similarity, offered the apostles money for that power of conferring the Holy Ghost, which he wished to use as merchandize, for his advantage, the indignant messenger of Christ exclaimed, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God."

(1.) Such was precisely the state of Balaam. *The fear and love of God were not the regulating and governing principles of his mind.* It would be vain to assert, in opposition to the whole course of the history, that he had no acquaintance with the character, the will, and the dealing of Jehovah. It is, indeed, certain, that he was a diviner, and pretender to those magical arts and incantations, so common in his age and country. But with these abatements he possessed, from whatever source derived, knowledge of a higher and nobler character, which, improved to its legitimate end, would have gifted him with distinctions immeasurably transcending every dream of worldly avarice, or all the wealth and power which the king of Moab could bestow. Unreal as his

divination and sorceries were, he had communications from the God of heaven, which might have made him wise unto salvation, and a diffusive blessing to all around him.

But alas, the illumination of the mind is by no means necessarily associated with the conversion of the heart. There are many who know God, yet glorify him not as God, by a sanctified use of their attainments to his honour. He only knows God aright, whose will and affections are overruled to love and obey him. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.* He whose knowledge of divine truth is merely theoretical, resembles the ill-assorted image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, whose head was of fine gold, and his feet, part of iron and part of clay. Whatever might be the extent of Balaam's acquaintance with the precepts of the living God, his character remained uninfluenced and unhallowed. One mean and sordid passion held its empire over his heart. He was the slave of that covetousness which, wherever it usurps dominion, is idolatry, and the death of religion. He loved the wages of iniquity. He was prepared, like the traitor Judas, should a favourable opportunity present itself, to offer for sale his conscience and his God. *They that will be rich fall into*

temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Satan hath no more powerful hold upon man, for his eternal ruin, than an undue anxiety for wealth, which loads the spirit, as with thick clay, and prevents it from rising to have its affections and conversation in heaven. Of such the arch enemy may say, as the Egyptians concerning Israel, by the Red Sea, "They are entangled in the land; the wilderness hath shut them in." The world has caught them in its snare; they surrender themselves tamely to its bondage; and its prince leads them captive at his will. What the offered rewards of divination were we know not. They certainly sufficed to bribe Balaam to his ruin; and to bring wretchedness, guilt, and death upon Israel. "Let your conversation, my brethren, be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have." "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Is God the portion of your inheritance, and of your cup? Are ye seeking first his kingdom and righteousness? Then will he provide all that is needful for you, from the abundance of his mercy.

If ye have counted all things but loss that ye may win Christ, your heavenly Father will with him, also freely give you all things.

Covetousness was the besetting sin of Balaam. It impelled him to perform the requirement of Balak, and to curse the people of God: The dread of divine indignation, and some reverence for the will of heaven, still indeed, wrestled with him,—as the angel laid hold of Lot's hand while he lingered in Sodom. While thus, halting between two opinions, he could neither enjoy the gifts and promises of Moab, nor commune with God in the happy sincerity of an undivided heart. Would you avoid this cheerless state? Avoid the feeling whence it arose; and all community with the covetous, whom God abhorreth. While many in Balaam's eager desire after present advancement, are crying, "Who will shew us any good?" take your holier stand with the man after God's own heart, and pray, "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." To see a professor of religion eager in the pursuit of wealth, saying to gold, Thou art my hope; and to fine gold, Thou art my confidence, is to behold the good seed of eternal salvation choked by cares and riches of this life,—to witness him who should be laying aside every weight, loading himself with a burden which must effectually prevent him from pressing towards the mark

for the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The strong passion necessarily occupies his heart; for no man can serve two masters. It necessarily places him within the utmost peril of that tremendous denunciation,— *Know ye not, that the covetous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?*

II. With a mind thus awfully divided between God and Mammon, we are prepared to find this unhappy man *parleying with the temptation which the messengers of Balak set before him.* "The elders of Moab, and the elders of Midian came unto Balaam with the rewards of divination in their hands, and spake unto him the words of Balak." They lodged with him. God also communed with him that night: and in answer to his statement of the errand on which the elders came, peremptorily forbade his acquiescence. "Thou shalt not go with them: thou shalt not curse the people for they are blessed." Alas, how does the diviner's covetousness soften down this unqualified expression of the mind of God! "Get you into your land; for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." He wished to go: he would have run greedily for reward: and restrained as he was, by a servile fear of the Most High, he could not frame his lips to that positive denial which might have preserved him from further

importunity. Princes are sent yet again more and more honourable than the former. Balaam, instead of closing his house and his heart against them, upon the strong authority of God's last command, admits them to both. Tempted himself, he endeavours to tempt Jehovah to a reversal of his decree, and to exact from him permission to seek the tents of Moab, and curse Israel. On what a precipice of danger—near what an abyss of woe, is that man standing, who, warned by the gracious Spirit of his heavenly Father, and fenced from temptation, as it were, by the outstretched hand of God himself, in a positive injunction, lends his ear to Satan, and dallies with the seduction that is luring his soul to death. The prayer which his lips dare not utter, but which is offered up in the secrecy of his soul, may be granted him in judgment. The same voice which gave Balaam permission to go on his godless journey, may withdraw the defences of restraining grace, and yield him up to those sins, with all their dreadful consequences, from which he was unwilling to be separated.

Not a word could Balaam utter, save as the Lord put it into his mouth. Yet he goes forward, self deceived, and to his ruin. Equally led away by the error of the wicked is that man, from whom God removes the controlling influences of his Spirit, and declares, *Ephraim is*

joined to idols; let him alone. If you regard the love of God—if you would avoid this mournful desertion—if you are anxious for the safety of your souls, implore the Lord to deny the wish of your affections, in infinite mercy, rather than to grant them in wrath and vengeance. *Cast me not away from thy presence, take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation!*

Even when Balaam had arrived at the camp of Moab, and strongly felt the hand of the Most High upon him, he repeated his sacrifices and invocations; importuning God to withdraw the prohibition, and defy Israel by his mouth. The farther he advances in this sad career, the more feebly does he seem to strive against the indwelling sin:—the more fully does he yield himself, so far as the divine will permits him to the views of Balak. The power of God irresistibly prevents the utterance of the meditated curse; but Balaam's will makes no resistance against it. There is no safety, my brethren, in that dark hour of temptation, when the prince of this world would bribe us to make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, except in the Spirit and imparted strength of the incarnate Saviour, when he foiled the enemy of souls in the wilderness, and said, "Get thee behind me Satan." There is no defence, under the influ-

ence of Almighty grace, like that unanswerable question of Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" We may entertain temptation, in a blind confidence of our own strength, like him, whose future enormities the prophet placed before his eyes, and who started back from the picture, imagining, that it would never be realized. "But what, is thy servant, a dog, that he should do this great thing?" We may imitate Peter in his assertion, "Though all men should deny thee, yet will I never deny thee." Like him, we may fall deeply from our steadfastness: and if the insulted Saviour whom we are led to deny, turn not, and look upon us with that mild and merciful rebuke, which reached and renewed the soul of Peter, we may fall, to rise no more. *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed.* What then shall be our refuge, when the prince of darkness thus makes his assault, through the corruption of in-dwelling sin? Realize the presence of God. Remember, that he is as near to observe your conduct, as Satan to seduce you from your allegiance. Nay, nearer still. The author of sin, the father of lies, stands by your side; but God is within

you, ready to communicate the fulness of spiritual strength, and to give you a victory over all the devices of your enemy, through our Lord Jesus Christ. *Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.* Resist the first seduction, with all the powers of your minds, in that ability which the sufficiency of the Holy Ghost can alone bestow: and then, take an unspeakable consolation from the blessed assurance, "that *no temptation can befal you, but such as is common to man—that God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way for you to escape, that you may be able to bear it.*"

III. Thus led astray by entertaining the seduction with complacency, *we are not surprised to find, that Balaam should oppose the rebuke of the Lord, and the voice of his own convictions.* He had, so to speak, extorted a permission from Jehovah, to accompany the princes of Moab: but even now the long suffering of heaven did not abandon him. The angel of the Lord withstood him in the way, graciously to convince him of his sin, and put him upon his guard, in the perilous way along which he journeyed. The messenger of heaven, the angel of the covenant, Jesus Christ himself, held forth the sword of a divine prohibition, and

flashed its terrors before him. But blindness had happened to him in part. His eyes were closed, so that he could not see; and in the darkness of unthinking security, and ungodly avarice, he urged forward the animal on which he rode, and would have precipitated himself upon certain death. Thrice would he have gone forward, and thrice did the ass swerve from the way, to save his soul alive. If the eyes of unthinking transgressors, who are pressing forward in the way of death, were not so strongly closed—if Satan had not so entirely blinded them, they would acknowledge the imminent peril to which they have been exposed, and the infinite compassions of God, by which they have been again and again preserved, in the full career of heedlessness and folly. Who shall tell, my brethren, on this side the disclosures of eternal judgment, how often it might have been said, concerning each of us, as we walked in the way of our own device, *Truly, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between thee and death.* Who shall tell, how much, and how fearfully we neglect the gracious providences which hinder us from the commission, and save us from, the punishment of sin, because God is not willing that we should perish; but come to repentance, and live. Of this description is every check of conscience,

every resistance which the voice of the Most High within us, the pages of scripture, the preaching of the gospel, and the pleadings of the Holy Spirit, separately, or unitedly, produce. And shall we strive for victory here? Shall we, determinately wrestle down the convictions and alarms of a gracious God, and say,—as we put aside the hand of his preventing goodness, "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go?" What a mournful, what a dreadful conquest, should we then achieve! A triumph over the opposition of conscience is most perilous to the eternal hope and state of men. That monitor retires not from every conflict, like the judge of Israel, with undiminished strength. It exerts a more feeble resistance after every attempt to subdue it; until, at length, instead of remaining a watchman for God, and a servant of his grace by the Holy Ghost, it becomes the obsequious slave of our corruptions, and slumbers on, amidst all the dangers of eternal death, like Sisera, in the tent of Jael, where he slept to awake no more.

When the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, had forbidden the further madness of the prophet, and showed him not only the extent of his danger, and of the divine forbearance, but that the curse of God, which he was anxious to utter against Israel, would probably be

averted from them, and directed against himself, he started from his security in deep alarm, and fell on his face before the angel of the Lord, who withstood his rebellious way. He even offered to return from his iniquitous journey; but in terms which manifested the struggle at that moment taking place in his mind, between the obedience of fear, and the incitement of avarice. "Now, if it displease thee, I will get me back again." The searcher of hearts beheld his insincerity, and wished to use the very sword of Balak against himself and Moab, by changing the meditated curse into a blessing. Accordingly, while his guilty purpose is controlled, the desire of his heart is given him. He has prevailed, as it were, against God, and against his soul, in this dreadful strife, and passes forward, as if the rebuke were utterly forgotten. Do you stand amazed at a conduct so blindly perverse and daring? My brethren, it exactly represents the spiritual condition of that man whom the gracious providence of God has checked by some salutary restraint, or rebuke of sickness, or affliction, that he might turn from the way of death; but who, after the first terror produced by his danger has passed away, and the good hand of his God is removed, follows the impulse of a carnal mind, and goes onward in his career of

transgression. Pray ye, that the Holy Ghost, the author of spiritual light, may not only open your eyes to behold the danger in which you stand from him, when your way is perverse; but, that he may also create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you. Pray, that you may return from every evil, to the fold of the eternal Shepherd, the salvation of the cross, and the command of God; and that so iniquity may not be your ruin. Woe to him that striveth with his Maker, in a dreadful contest between the mercy of the Lord, and the incitement of his own sin! Woe to him who thus resists the offered grace of Him, whose Spirit shall not always strive with man! Who hath thus hardened himself against the Lord, and prospered in such a warfare? God forbid, that our experience should answer the question! *He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy.*

IV. It plainly appears, that while Balaam *feared God in the letter, he absolutely disregarded the Spirit of the divine command.* His lips were closed, that he could not curse Israel. Some invisible, but Almighty agency on the other hand, changed the intended denunciation into a large and liberal declaration of blessing upon the people. Balak stood ready to bestow

the wages of unrighteousness; but Balaam must not obtain them. If Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold, he cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do less or more. At length he rises up, and returns to his place, no richer than when he came into the tents of Moab. What however, he could not effect, according to the purpose of Balak, by cursing the people, he accomplishes by recommending him to seduce the chosen heritage into sin, and leave it deprived of its almighty protection, like our fallen parents in paradise, when they knew that they were naked. The idolatrous women of Moab, as the sacred record declares, "caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord, in the matter of Peor; and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord."[1] The revelation made to John in Patmos expressly testifies, that Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.[2] The diviner of Mesopotamia, therefore, pretends to honour Jehovah with his lips, while his heart devises the most dreadful scourge against His people. He will, if possible, obtain the presents of Balak; and he scruples

[1] 1 Numb. xxxi. 16. [2] Revel. ii. 14.

not to direct him to the mode of leading God's people into a sensuality and idolatry, which, unchecked, would be their ruin. O what an extent of guilt is here! Balak aimed only at a victory over the Israelites. Balaam, professing reverence the while for the God of Israel, shews the King how he may destroy their souls. He succeeded to his wish; and twenty four thousand men perished by the plague, from among the congregation. How miserable is such a subterfuge, how malignant the guilt of such a rebellion! And yet, it is imitated by those who harden their hearts against the Lord, and, checked from dishonouring him and destroying themselves, in one direction, aim a more deadly blow against his authority, his love, and the cross of his son in another. Surely it had been well with Balaam, if, when he beheld and testified the happiness of Israel, he had fled from the camp of Moab into the valley, where the chosen people lay with the all-sufficient Lord as their guard, and, if he had said, 'I will go with you, for I have heard that God is with you.' Allow me affectionately to warn you against the destructive error and the sad obduracy of Balaam. Ye may have a name to live, while ye are dead. Ye may have the form of godliness while ye deny its power; but consider, that, unlike the forced, hollow obedience of Balaam, while his

heart meditated the deepest treason against the Most High, and his hand was opened to receive the bribe, *true religion is of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God.*

V. While Balaam was effecting his unrighteous purpose against the thousands of Israel, *he was himself hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and seduced to his destruction.* He goes forward to curse the people; and probably, notwithstanding the divine prohibition, with a lurking hope that he might destroy them. Yet so entirely is he withheld, that the much extolled emphasis of his curse cannot even reach the life of the beast on which he rode—"I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I slay thee." What! is the man who came from Mesopotamia to Moab, in order to devote a mighty nation to destruction, unable to slay an ass? Yet thus it is, that sinners delude themselves, and imagine they may oppose their long-suffering God triumphantly, when their utmost power is as contemptible in his sight, as if they should forbid the sun to rise, the ocean to heave, or the seasons to succeed each other, and expect obedience to the command. O guilty man, who art thus deluded, "hast thou an arm like God; canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" Canst thou change the current of his purpose,

or affect, in the slightest degree, the determinations of his omnipotent will? Will ye then, my brethren, persist in endeavouring to oppose the designs of his love, and in daring the terrors of his wrath? *What will ye do, when he riseth up; and when he visiteth, what shall ye answer him?*

Little indeed, will the knowledge of the seer, or the commission of the prophet avail to prove their wisdom, or to second their pretensions to admiration, while their way is perverse before their God. Jonah is sent with a commission against Nineveh; but he fled from the presence of the Lord, went down into the sides of the ship, and lay, and was fast asleep, amidst the roaring of that tempest which his own disobedience had provoked, until he was aroused by the voice of a heathen shipmaster. Balaam is the admiration of Moab. His fame as a diviner has travelled far and wide. Yet, while on the very errand which was so triumphantly to establish his reputation, he is rebuked by the voice of an ass. Then, and not till then, the scales fall from his eyes. Sin wars against the soul by its stupifying, not less than by its polluting influence. It lays hold of transgressors, confident because they are ignorant, and leads them on to their destruction, as Elisha led the Syrians, smitten with blindness, into the midst of Samaria, when they believed themselves in the way

to seize the man whom their master sought. If men knew whither the adversary of their souls is conducting them—if they could behold the Lord opposing their guilty way, with what dread would the discovery overwhelm them! But Satan casts them into a deep slumber; and God in judgment permits it to fall upon them. When, like Balaam, they run greedily after the rewards of evil, he even sends them strong delusions, that they may believe a lie, since they "will not believe the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." Here was one whose eyes were opened—who heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the almighty—who proclaimed the coming triumphs of Israel, and the advent of Israel's Saviour—who yet beheld not the fate impending over himself; or was so far led astray by the love of sin, as to brave the consequences. Here was one, who in obedience to the remaining struggles of a better principle within him, could say, as he contrasted the privileges of God's own heritage, with the portion of his enemies, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Yet he remained so fully enslaved by evil, that he had no power to seek the salvation for which his Spirit appears to yearn, or else, in total defiance of every thing which he must have learned concerning the character of God, expects to die the

death of the righteous, while he lives the life of the wicked. With what a complete, with what an awful delusion does the conduct of Balaam present us! What numbers alas, almost passing numbers, "profess that they know God, but in works deny him,"—give utterance to a hope full of immortality—call themselves by the Redeemer's name—and expect all the privileges and blessedness of his people, who defy his authority, insult his cross, and do despite to the Spirit of his grace. Balaam wished to have his dying portion with the righteous, but his end was violence and the sword, among the sinners of Moab, with whom he had lingered, or to whom he returned, that he might claim the wages of iniquity. He beheld the Saviour, but not nigh; and the star of redeeming love, which he saw rising over the world at the distance of fourteen hundred and fifty years, never dawned upon his soul with the light of its salvation. Vain, worse than vain, were the doctrinal attainments and the visions of Balaam. Beware, lest ye pride yourselves in such an acquaintance with religion as influences not your hearts and conduct. Beware, lest ye foster that most dreadful of all the deceptions which man can apply to his soul, that he may walk in the paths of his own device, live to himself, and dishonour the Lord who bought him, yet have his portion with

those who have devoted themselves in holy faith to the service of true religion, denied themselves, and lived to the glory of their redeeming God. The delusion may continue to deepen and enlarge around such a man: it may even withstand that influence of truth which a dying hour usually produces: and he may depart, having whispered "Peace, peace to his soul, when there is no peace." But darkness flies not before the risen sun so speedily and so surely, as error and self-deceit will be scattered by the effulgence of that light which shall issue from the great throne set up in judgment. *Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I say unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.* "From all such evil and mischief; from all the crafts and assaults of the devil; from thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation, Good Lord deliver us!"

(1.) *The testimony which wicked men are obliged to render in favour of true religion, and of the blessedness of those who possess it demands our serious consideration.* Balaam stands by the side of the King of Moab, with an offer of every reward that Balak can bestow if he will curse Israel. He turns his face towards the

wilderness; he sees the goodly array of the people, the tabernacle of the Lord among them, and the magnificent pillar of the cloud spread over them, as the shield of an Almighty defence. He looks forward through coming generations, and sees their victories over the enemies of the Most High. Struck with a deep conviction of their superior mercies, he exclaims, in the full language of sincerity, as the contrast bursts upon him, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Even thus are transgressors checked for a moment by the voice of conscience, and forced to compare their situation with that of the servants of God, and to say, *How goodly are thy tents O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!* Perhaps that offender never lived who has not occasionally sighed to partake the mercies and blessings of the righteous. Does the felicity of the good part they have chosen come home to any of your minds, at this moment? Give it room, and cherish it in your hearts, until it lead you to the throne of grace through the Saviour, to supplicate for a similar interest in the goodness and the love of God. *Bless me, even me also, O my Father.*

(2.) We may learn from this instructive history, *the impregnable safety of those who truly love and serve God.* Of such the Is-

raelites were at this moment a type. They sat still in their tents, in perfect ease and security; not even suspecting the mischief which Balak and Balaam plotted against them; but which the Almighty threw back upon the inventors. The Most High fought for Israel. The victory was gained, before they knew their danger; and their salvation was of the Lord. "Who shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" *The angel of the Lord encampeth around them that fear him, and delivereth them.* The enemy cannot do them violence, the son of wickedness cannot approach to hurt them. "Happy is the people that is in such a case, yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Pray with all your heart, that his Spirit may unite you to himself in the bonds of the everlasting covenant of Jesus Christ. Pray, that ye may have grace to hate all sin, and to serve your heavenly Father with reverence and godly fear. So *shall he cover you with his feathers, and under his wings shall you trust; his faithfulness and truth shall be your shield and buckler.*

SERMON XI.

THE REPROOF OF MOSES TO THE TRIBES OF GAD AND REUBEN.

NUMBERS XXXII. 6, 7.

And Moses said unto the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel, from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them?

THE entire separation of the Israelites from surrounding nations must be ranked among the most remarkable features of the gracious covenant established between them and the Most High. "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth." But while this broad line of distinction was drawn, which commanded the chosen race to dwell alone, and not to be reckoned among the nations, they were enjoined to cultivate that blessed

principle of mutual affection, which would issue in constant reciprocations of good will and beneficence. The whole law proclaims, not only their exclusive consecration to God, but the obligation of every individual to promote the common welfare. The same lineaments are discernible in the covenant made between God and man, through Jesus Christ. They who possess a personal and saving interest in the mercies of redemption, by living faith in the Son of God are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." Of the mystical body, so ransomed, and so dedicated, every sincere Christian is a spiritual member; and the whole is united to the eternal High Priest of our profession, as its glorified head. "Whether then, one member suffer all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you." A principle of mutual dependence is made the bond of love throughout the Redeemer's church, under the presiding impulse of adoring gratitude for his salvation.

Such is the similarity between the law given by Moses, and the dispensation of grace and

truth which came by Jesus Christ. Every precept or incident therefore in the former, by which we are taught to assist our fellow soldiers in the common warfare for salvation, must utter a voice of instruction to those whom the glorious gospel of the blessed God teaches to "bear each other's burdens, and so to fulfil the law of the Saviour's love."

Of this character is the history from which the text is taken. The tribes of Gad and Reuben, struck with the fertility of the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, and admiring its fitness for the pasturage of their numerous flocks and herds, besought Moses to fix their heritage within it, and to excuse them from seeking a settlement beyond the river that separated them from the promised land. "The country which the Lord smote before the congregation of Israel is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle: wherefore if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan." So suspiciously did this request sound in the ear of Moses, or rather so plainly did it appear to speak the language of selfishness, and the love of ease, that the man of God felt himself obliged to rebuke and condemn it. The expostulation was kindly received: and whether the tribes were ashamed of their unworthy purpose, or had

really never meant to desert their brethren, they immediately offered to go forth to battle with the general host—to expel the devoted inhabitants of the land—to establish the heritage of the Most High triumphantly within its borders, and then, to return and take possession of their own portion and choice. The offer was accepted, and conscientiously fulfilled. Half the tribe of Manasseh was also permitted to settle in Gilead; probably because it was too extensive for those to whom it was first granted, and because it had been principally won by their valour and conduct.

Without attempting minutely to examine the whole history, I propose to draw matter for consideration from the question of Moses in the text: "Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here; and wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them?"

I. Bear it then in mind, that *while ye seek an inheritance in the kingdom of God, ye must not overlook the spiritual interests of the Redeemer's church.* If he who gave himself to death, that he might open the kingdom of heaven to all believers, had made us independent of each other, we might have walked, every man in the way of life, without sympathy with our fellow-pilgrims. We might have fought the good fight of faith,

without turning round to help, or to save our fellow soldiers in the war. But in that delightful communion of saints which, through the bonds of the everlasting gospel, unites every member of the family in heaven and earth, with him of whom both are named, there is a unity of interest and aim, by which the followers of Christ are unequivocally known. The blessed Jesus, very shortly before he sealed his love to mankind on the cross, prayed for his disciples, "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" That charity received into the soul, when it embraces Christ crucified, and glories in his cross, "seeketh not her own but the profit of many, that they may be saved. By this may all men know that we are the disciples of the Lamb of God,—if we love one another." The various denominations of Christians may resemble Joseph's coat of many colours, in the more minute shades of difference and subdivision. But, where the love of God in Christ Jesus is truly shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost, its possessors will resemble in unity of spirit, the robe of their suffering Master, woven without seam or schism from the top to the bottom. One will not say, "I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, and another, I am of

Cephas, and another, I am of Christ." Nor will each, in selfish abstraction "see his brother have need, and shut up his compassion from him," because of some minute difference; as the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Ill would the tribes of Gad and Reuben have fulfilled their sacred obligations to the Israelites, if, when engaged in the service of God, marching under the pillar of the cloud, as their standard in the war, and led onwards by the Lord of Hosts, they had endeavoured to extort the land of Gilead as their portion; and left their brethren to undergo future combats, while they reposed in ease and luxury. As unworthily would the Christian act, who, having vowed and sworn "manfully to fight under the banner of the cross, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant," should be so much occupied with his own concerns, as to feel no sympathy for his brethren. Is it written, with reference to every believer of the gospel, *No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die we are the Lord's?* And can this Scripture be fulfilled by those who profess to seek that gift of God which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, and yet are careless of others who need the same mercy,

and of him who should see of the travail of his soul in the conversion of transgressors. The God whose you are by the purchase of his blood—whom you profess to serve in the gospel of his Son, has made the advancement of your fellow-sinners towards heaven a material and solemn part of your duty. Would you desire to be discharged from performing it? Would ye sacrifice the privilege of making known the mercies of redemption, of advancing the salvation of souls, and of awakening the jubilee of the blessed in heaven over sinners that repent?

The two tribes, with the half tribe of Manasseh, were bound to promote the common welfare, victories, and glories of Israel. So, every member of Christ who hath a good hope through grace, that he is admitted into the pale of his Saviour's mercy, is equally engaged to hold forth the word of life, for the common good. He must aim to bring all around him within that fold where he hath found rest, pasture, hope, peace, joy, and life eternal to his own soul. He is bound to omit no practicable effort which may advance the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ; until, so far as in him lieth, under the grace and blessing of the Holy Ghost, all whom he can assist, "may come in the unity

of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Reuben and Gad would have been ill contented, had the men of Israel deserted them, before they had obtained a settlement in Gilead. They were therefore, engaged to stand by the side of their brethren through all the battles yet before them. We should equally regard ourselves injured, should they who ought to remain in the same rank with ourselves, and to fight the battles of the Lord, against the mighty, retreat, in the love of ease and self-indulgence, and coldly leave us without an effort, or a prayer in our behalf. *Whatsoever therefore ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.*

Are you the redeemed children of God—conscious that his vows are upon you, devoted to his honour, and zealous for his glory? Does your heart exclaim, as each of you surveys his obligation to the riches of his Saviour's love. "Here am I, send me?" Do you ask for opportunities of bringing others to a knowledge of the truth, that they may be saved? Survey the scene around you. Behold a world dead in trespasses and sins. Does it not abound with persons ignorant of "that eternal life which consists in knowing the true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent?" Are multitudes now living

without him in the world; uttterly estranged from that appointed Mediator "who is the way, and the truth, and the life?" Are multitudes walking in the way of death, denying the Lord who bought them, scoffing at the unsearchable mercies of his cross, or contemning the sole and almighty efficacy of his blood for justification, by attempting to establish a righteousness of their own? Are many slumbering at the post of duty, when they should be engaged in conflict with the powers of darkness? Will ye then say, that ye have no means of saving them? Can nothing be done to make the ignorant wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus? Is it impossible to direct the scoffer to look on him whom his godless ribaldry has pierced, and to mourn because of him? May not he who has hitherto refused the salvation of Jesus Christ, fall down at his feet, and exclaim with Thomas, "My Lord and my God," —or with Peter, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head?" May not the Pharisee be convinced of his transgression; and taking his lowly station by the cross, exclaim in the fervour of a broken and contrite spirit, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" May not he who has allowed himself to sink into the lethargy of sloth and security, be pricked to the heart, and aroused to cry, "What must I do to be

saved?" Surely, with the Most High all things are possible. And as he often works by the most humble instrumentality, in order that the excellency of the power may be of him, and not of man, is it beyond the limit of hope and probability, that he should make you helpers and blessings to your brethren in the holy cause?

Are there moreover, no dark and distant lands upon which the Sun of righteousness hath never arisen—no millions of your fellow creatures sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, to whom, as you point them to the day-star of salvation, which the gospel reveals, you may cry, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee?* Are there no institutions appointed for sending forth the scriptures of light and truth, "that God's way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations?" Are there no missionaries who are gone forth, filled with the love, and zealous for the salvation, of the Son of God, to wage their holy conflict with the powers of darkness, and to cast down the throne of Satan, even where he seems to have seated it most firmly? Are there no efforts made to advance the kingdom and glory of our God and Saviour both at home and abroad? There surely are. Will you then doubt whether you can serve the cause of Israel and be useful to the camp of God? *Let your*

light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

II. As an additional incentive to this duty, we should consider, that *a selfish inattention to the spiritual welfare of our brethren tends to depress their ardour, and diminish their strength for the war against sin and Satan.* "Wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the Lord hath given them?" The soul of this timid unbelieving people had been already much discouraged, by reason of the way. Their spirit had failed and fainted at the prospect of war with the sons of Anak, and with the high and fenced cities of Canaan. If, with the complete array of the twelve tribes they dreaded to join battle with their enemies, the desertion of two tribes and a half would greatly increase their terror, their infidelity, and consequently their guilty disobedience. Soldiers in the presence of a formidable adversary, already fearful of their inferiority, and almost despairing of success, would feel increased alarm and despondency, should a large detachment from among them desert their post, and flee to a place of refuge and plenty, heedless of their endangered fellows. Even so, weak and doubting Christians, more alarmed by the power of their foes,

and by their own weakness, than encouraged by the presence and all-sufficiency of their Saviour, would be still further tempted to faint, should they see others, on whom their eye is fixed, going back, and walking no more with Jesus; or so much occupied with their own privileges and inheritance in the mercies of the gospel, as to cast no look upon them. A spirit of selfish inattention—that spirit in which all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ, when each ought to direct a friendly eye, and extend an aiding hand to the concerns of others, is a stumbling stone, and a rock of offence, as dangerous as it is common. In the same proportion that it is delightful to take sweet counsel with the servants of Christ, and to walk with them in the house of God as friends, is it discouraging to be neglected and forgotten. Timid spirits, who cannot bear the world's scorn and ridicule with composure, often take courage from finding themselves with those who are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. On the other hand, they often shrink from avowing him, when, like the children of the captivity, they are called to pass alone through the fiery furnace of opposition, contempt, open mockery, or silent derision. They who are commencing the divine life, with all the elements of their new and heavenly being feeble, and almost un-

defined, and who would gladly have enjoyed the countenance of more experienced Christians, severely feel their privation, when that support is withdrawn. Too frequently, indeed, they are seduced, or alarmed to follow Jesus afar off, when they see others shrinking, who should have walked boldly by his side. Possibly they may even deny him, in the judgment hall of Pilate, and the house of his enemies. Many, whose hearts were yearning after the joys and hopes of true religion, have, perhaps, been kept back from attaining either, by looking, in vain, for help to their brethren. Many, whom the gracious Spirit of God appeared to influence, have suspended, as it were, their approach to the Saviour, their conflict with sin, their walk with God, upon the resolution of a friend; and cried, as Barak to Deborah, "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go up with me, then I will not go up." It must needs distress those who sincerely desire to do the will of God, when they find themselves called to bear alone the burden and heat of the day. It may be a temptation to fail, and even to return from the holy strife, when, weary and heavy laden with their personal conflict, and their holy care for the safety and welfare of the Redeemer's church, they see those who ought to be foremost in the

battle retreating from the field, and merely anxious for their own ease and indulgence. It is an axiom in religion, that the strong ought to help the weak; and all to build up each other in their most holy faith. Apply the axiom to yourselves. Are there no hands that hang down, no feeble knees to be strengthened? No fearful hearts, to whom your example may cry, "Be strong?" No deserters from the Christian warfare, and from him who appointed their combat, who must be led back again to their station in the field, admonished, rebuked, warned, and, if possible, restored in the spirit of meekness? Are there none wounded with the fiery darts of the wicked, to be brought to that great physician, who may heal their souls? None fallen, who may be raised, and renewed again to repentance? No loiterers to be urged forward, no careless ones to be aroused, no mourners to be cheered, no doubting ones to be directed, no faithful to be animated? Are there no warriors of more heavenly courage, more Christian experience, more holy caution, more fervent love, more chastened zeal, than yourselves, from whom you may learn the power and practice of true religion, and become followers of them, as they also are of Christ? While any of these, therefore, remain, either needing your assistance, or offering you bright and glorious

examples of Christian holiness, will ye say, that an individual, and his exertions, will not be missed from the multitude of the soldiers of Jesus Christ? O for that spirit of Uriah, when, at the insidious command of David he returned from the war, and refused to indulge his own ease, while the thousands of his fellow-soldiers were enduring the hardships of war! "The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents; and my Lord Joab, and the servants of my Lord, are encamped in the open fields. Shall I, then, go into mine house to eat and to drink? As thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing." And might I express a wish for those who are tempted by the worldliness, lukewarmness, or unbelief of selfish professors of religion, I would utter my heart's desire, that they may each be strengthened against all the discouragements of abandonment, or inattention, to say, *None of these things move me;* and although no man should stand with them, to add, *I pray God, that it may not be laid to their charge.*

III. Again, *The measure of privilege enjoyed by a Christian, and the extent of his happiness in the rest that remaineth for the people of God, are inseparably connected with his active and conscientious desire to advance the welfare of the church, and the glory of the*

Saviour. If the men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, should go armed before the Lord, as they had promised, and fight on behalf of their brethren, for the possession of Canaan; the land of Gilead, on which their desires rested, would be given them, with all its wealth, for a possession. If, on the contrary, they should not pass over Jordan, they must quit their hope of this beautiful and fertile country, and take probably a much less favourable inheritance, by lot, with the rest. Our gracious Lord has plainly led us to expect gradations of blessedness, proportioned to the talents he has bestowed, and the industry, fidelity, zeal, and perseverance, with which they have been improved. That unprofitable servant, who hid his lord's talent in a napkin, was cast into outer darkness. He who gained five talents received authority over five cities. That more distinguished steward to whom ten were intrusted, and who had doubled his loan, received authority over ten cities. The more conscientiously we stand upon the Lord's side, and aim to advance the purposes of his mercy, and the kingdom of his love in our own hearts, and in the world around us, the more surely shall we testify the work of his renewing Spirit. He who labours to instruct others will find himself most effectually taught; and in nothing more, than in

the knowledge, spirit, and practice of that "ingrafted word which is able to save his soul." He who doeth the work of the Lord negligently, dishonours the unsearchable riches of salvation. He who watereth others shall be watered himself. It is impossible to be sincere in the faith, deeply penetrated with the goodness of God, constrained by the love of Christ, sanctified by the power of the Holy Ghost, and yet indifferent to the extension of religion, and the success of others, through love of ease, or fear of conflict. In proportion as we abstract ourselves from the influence and exercise of that love of the brethren, which shews that we have passed from death unto life, and which desires the same change in them, do we diminish our comfort, detract from our spiritual joy, and shed dimness over that hope full of immortality, which the Saviour pours into a believer's heart, and which is the pole star of his way to God. The Father, indeed, makes not our success a necessary condition of acceptance, when we strive to bring others to a knowledge of the truth, that they may be saved, or assist to build them up in their most holy faith. He does not say, as Joseph to his offending brethren, "Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." But he will look, that we have used every exertion to make that brother the com-

panion of our way. He will expect that we have not left our post of duty, where we might help, and be helped, in the spiritual conflict. That fearful, selfish spirit, which shrinks from exertion for the common good, and cries, when it should help the brethren, "There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets," must not expect such a conformity with the mind that was in Christ Jesus, or such a holy enlargement of love and joy in obedience, as may manifest the higher work of sanctification, and the more than ordinary meetness for the victories of the Christian warfare, and the prize of the high calling of God in his Son. When, indeed, the Christian shall have done all that is commanded him, he will still be an unprofitable servant; and his reward will be solely of grace, and not of debt. But that reward is promised by the word of God; secured by the death of Christ; and will be conferred according to the earnestness of zeal, and the labour of love. *They especially, that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever.*

What then, it may be asked, is our duty? Even that which the men of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh undertook at the suggestion of Moses,—to go armed before the Lord, until he have driven

out his enemies before him, and the land be subdued before the Lord. My brethren, through the compassions of the Father, through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, through the intercession of the Great High Priest, and Advocate of sinners, we may, as contrite believers in the atonement of Jesus Christ, advance a claim to the possession of a rest, of which the beauty and fertility of Gilead was a mean and perishing type and shadow—a rest, of which the blessedness is immeasurable by man, until he shall have attained to its enjoyment. But we are as yet among the armies of the militant church. We have a warfare to wage for ourselves; and we are commanded to assist our brethren in the same holy combat. Shall they go to war, and shall we sit here? This be far from us. How then shall we act? O that all would cry, "We will go armed before the Lord! As the Israelites marched in the presence of Jehovah, who dwelt upon the mercy seat of the ark, so will we go forward in this gracious strife, with the presence and protection of his good Spirit, by his positive command, under his unerring guidance, trusting in his power, and cheered by the assurance of becoming "more than conquerors through him who loved us." But what shall be our preparation? Even that of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. We will go *armed* before

the Lord. Shall the weapons of our warfare then, be carnal? Assuredly not, if we expect to succeed. Arms of earthly temper, wielded in the unassisted natural strength of creatures in whose flesh dwelleth no good thing, avail nothing against the principalities and powers of sin, with which we have to wrestle. No; our arms must be *mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Wherefore, put ye on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.* Thus going forth, thus armed, and thus depending, we may trust, that the Lord will bruise Satan under our feet shortly; and enable us to raise the song of triumph—*Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Was it then commanded, that these tribes, who thus engaged to assist their brethren, should leave their families and herds undefended, while they themselves marched far from home, to fight the battles of Israel against the enemy? By no means. They built or repaired cities in Gilead, in which they placed their wives, their little ones, their flocks, and all their cattle. They left the largest part of their warriors behind them, to

guard those who were otherwise defenceless. We learn[1] that the forces of Reuben, Gad, and the half of Manasseh exceeded an hundred and ten thousand fighting men, of whom, as it is written,[2] only forty thousand, prepared for war, passed over before the Lord unto battle, to the plains of Jericho. This number was, no doubt, declared to be sufficient for the purpose assigned them. Most waywardly and unthinkingly would the people have acted, if they had left all most valuable to them, at the mercy of the spoiler, while they were engaged in distant wars, and struggling on a foreign soil. Dearly would the victories of Israel have been purchased, if ruin had come to the cities of Gilead, while its defenders were absent in the common war. That, my brethren, is a most perverted, mistaken, dangerous principle, which induces a professor to desert, or to neglect the sphere of private and immediate duty, upon any pretence, or any expectation of advancing the Redeemer's kingdom of grace in the hearts of strangers. How shall we answer it to God, if our own vineyard run to waste, while we are absent, affecting to prune and dress the vineyard of our neighbour? Can we expect a blessing on our labours while we employ our time, or our affections far from our

[1] Numbers xxvi. [2] Josuah iv. 13.

own homes, our families, and the sacred demands of domestic obligation. Is not our first and most strenuous effort due to the bodily health, to the mental ease, to the useful or religious instruction of husband, or wife, parent, or child, brother, or sister, friend or domestic? *If any man provide not for his own, and especially for them of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* The people of Jerusalem laboured at the wall, as a public work, and of universal obligation. But every man began at home, and wrought before his own door. The whole task was thus most effectually accomplished, because each person had charge of that particular portion, with which the safety of his family, and himself was most intimately concerned. The more effectually the growth of true religion is advanced in our own souls, and our families, the more effectually shall we tend to edify the whole body in love—the more certainly shall we strengthen each other's hands, and encourage each other's hearts. Act thus then, fellow soldiers, for the gospel of salvation, nor doubt of success. The warfare will soon be accomplished, and the victory gained. You will, ere long, be dismissed to your rest. And when the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ shall come forth with his reward, he will

give to each of you an entrance into the land of promise, into the country of everlasting fruition. *Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!*

SERMON XII.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

NUMBERS XXXV. 9—12.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan; then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.

SANCTUARIES, or asylums, whither persons accused of crime might flee and be safe from the pursuit of vengeance, until their cause should be adjudged, are almost coeval with the earliest records of Pagan history. "The temples, altars, statues, and tombs of heroes, became the ordinary retreat of those who found themselves aggrieved by the rigour of the law, or oppressed by the power of tyrants. It was supposed, that the gods undertook to punish him who thus sought refuge with them, if he were indeed

criminal; and consequently, that it would be impious, should man attempt to take vengeance out of the hands of the immortals." The practice was continued through the long reign of ecclesiastical darkness, and papal superstition; until the abuse became so flagrant and enormous, as utterly to defeat the ends of justice. At length, after the light of the reformation had burst upon the world, the better feeling of the community, and the outraged charities and ordinances of society, united to occasion the entire suppression of these privileged abuses. Their origin may doubtless be traced to a corrupt imitation of that beneficent and wise appointment which the Most High planned for his people, within the borders of the promised land. The altar of God had been already declared a place of refuge for unwitting offenders.[1] When the chosen tribes entered their inheritance, and began to execute the laws of their divine government, prescribed in the wilderness, six cities were appointed, three on either side Jordan; whither manslayers who pleaded misadventure might flee and be safe, until lawful inquiry had been made, whether they had transgressed through malice and presumption, or unawares, and through mistake. But, lest the gracious inten-

[1] Exodus xxi. 12—14.

tion of God should be abused, and the cities of refuge should become the strong holds of licentiousness and crime, they were guarded from pollution by the most scrupulous and solemn provisions. They offered safety only to the manslayer innocent of criminal intention. The wilful murderer was dragged from within their walls, and given over, without remedy, to the death which he had himself inflicted.

These cities, however, had a reference more remote and spiritual, than any institution merely political. They are not, indeed, decidedly quoted by prophets under the old economy, with minute and positive appropriation to him who should appear in the fulness of time, as the sinner's only hope of mercy. Nor does either the Saviour himself, or the apostles of his gospel, pointedly, and by name, apply them to the great mystery of exclusive salvation, by the death of Christ. Yet, they are so plainly alluded to by the mind of the Holy Ghost, both in the Old and New Testament, that we are not permitted to doubt the typical character of their appointment. "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope," saith the voice of mercy, by the inspiration of Zechariah; alluding no doubt to the protection which the manslayer would obtain if he gained the city of refuge. St. Paul describes the strong con-

solation of "fleeing for refuge to the hope set before us," in a passage which universal consent has associated with the gracious appointment of the cities of refuge.[1] With such a guide as that great apostle, we may safely include both views of the subject.

I. Our first consideration is due to THE CIRCUMSTANCES BY WHICH THIS SACRED INSTITUTION WAS DISTINGUISHED.

He who doeth all things, did all things well. There is a harmony between every design and its end, too obvious and too beautiful, to be mistaken by those, who have pleasure in contemplating the counsels of God, the operations of his providence, or the manifestations of his transcendent grace.

(1.) *The appointed cities of refuge will appear to such inquirers admirably calculated to answer the important ends of mercy and justice on the part of God towards Israel.* The patriarchal law against murder remained unrepealed. The nearest of kin had a right to slay the murderer, in whatever place he might meet him. To him was committed the execution of that awful sentence, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." But

[1] Heb. vi. 17, 18.

the inconsiderate impetuosity of private revenge might often confound the innocent with the guilty. The dreadful activity of personal hatred, instead of awaiting the slow process of minute investigation, would frequently impute motives of malignity to the transgressor, when none existed in his mind. These cities of refuge, therefore, were ordained, and so judiciously distributed, as not to exceed half a day's journey from any part of the promised land. The Jewish writers affirm many particulars, admirably and beautifully illustrative of the wisdom and beneficence, in which the consecration of these cities to the purposes of sanctuary originated. They were placed on eminences, overlooking the surrounding country, and affording a plain direction to the fugitive, as he fled towards them, from the avenger of blood. The brazen serpent, when raised up by Moses, at the command of God among the dying thousands of the congregation, was not more visible throughout the tents and tribes of Israel, than were these gracious institutions of the Most High, in behalf of his people. The roads to the cities of refuge were objects of especial care, and of scrupulous attention. They were, as is generally admitted, about fifty-six feet in breadth; as smooth and even as possible; so that no impediment might delay the man-

slayer, as he fled along them for his life. Bridges were erected, where the ways were crossed by a brook, or river. The magistrates of the city inspected them yearly, on a certain day; and repaired them with the utmost diligence. But, as it was very possible that other roads might intersect that, along which the endangered manslayer held his way to the distinct city, distract his attention, and either lead him from the sanctuary, or allow his adversary to overtake and slay him, while he delayed to make inquiry, stones were erected, at every cross-road, with the welcome term, REFUGE, REFUGE, inscribed upon them, in characters so large and plain, that he who ran might read them. The gates of the city stood open night and day. To have closed them, under any circumstances, might have defeated the end for which the appointment was made; and have given up the wretched fugitive to the grasp of the avenger, even when he had escaped to the very walls of the asylum. Once entered within those walls of refuge, the citizens were under the necessity of receiving, and accommodating him. Every thing was provided for his need; he was treated with care, tenderness, and regard; and permitted to know no real want, until the time of his trial came. No weapon was allowed to be made within the city, lest the enemy should

possess himself of arms, and wreak his anger upon the victim, even when sheltered behind the rampart of a divine institution. These distinguished cities were part of the Levite's lot, throughout the land,—the inheritance and portion of the priesthood. They were governed by that body, and unalienably attached to it, under every future circumstance of the Jewish church. They were appointed, equally for the stranger and for the Israelite, without difference, or distinction, or partiality. As any of the dwellers within the land might incur the guilt and danger of unpremeditated blood-shedding, every one had equal right and claim to the comprehensive refuge of the appointed cities. Finally, they formed an essential part of the blessings of the promised inheritance. Nor was it possible, that an Israelite should look toward them, without a memorial in this gracious appointment, "that the lines were fallen to him in a pleasant place, and that he had a goodly heritage."

(2.) If the antitype excel the type—if the inward spiritual grace surpass the outward visible sign—if the substance be more worthy than the shadow, however bright its hues, graceful its form, or imposing its magnificence, then, the rich mercies of salvation, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, prefigured by these appointed

cities, demand our most attentive regard. *The gospel redemption is admirably adapted to promote and secure our safety, as transgressors, whom the pursuit of vengeance closely tracks, and whom the hand of justice is uplifted to destroy.*

Did the ancient city rear its towers of safety on high, to attract the regard of those who sought its true defence? Raise your eyes, and survey the deliverance effected for you, on the mount of crucifixion. See Jesus Christ lifted up on the cross, as an ensign to the people,—as a standard of safety,—as an impregnable munition of rocks, to the penitent and fear-stricken offender. Direct your view higher still, even to the seat of everlasting dominion in heaven. Is not Jesus Christ "exalted at the right hand of his Father, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins?" The word is not distant. The word is nigh unto all, even the word of eternal salvation, soliciting the guilty to speed their way, and standing, like a city upon a hill, to guide their footsteps rightly in that way. *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all them that call upon him faithfully.* Eternal life is freely set before you; and he who sees it not, must either close his eyes in wilful darkness, or be so bent and bowed down among the low pur-

suits, and poor sensualities of this life, that he cannot elevate his gaze, either to the cross, or to the throne — either to Jesus Christ upon Calvary, or in heaven, as the guide of his endangered soul, into the way of pardon, peace, and everlasting bliss.

Was the road broad, plain, straight, and smooth, so that nothing, except his own breathless haste, might impede the flying man-slayer? And doth face answer to face in a glass with more minuteness, than the highway of salvation, through the crucified Son of God, resembles the smooth, plain, and spacious path to the city of refuge? *The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.* Even such a way, did the Evangelical prophet proclaim, as he pointed to the salvation of Christ, through the dim vista of coming ages. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed." Survey the path that leads you to the Redeemer. Except your own sins, your worldliness, thoughtlessness, self-righteousness, or security, what other hindrance lies before you? Is not that road to salvation, which God the Father hath provided, in the merits and sa-

crifice of his beloved Son, so vast, so spacious, so comprehensive, that all the tribes, and kindreds, and tongues, and languages, of mankind have room to press forward along it? The way of Christian holiness and duty, indeed, is strait and narrow, but the sinner's way to Christ is broad as his soul can wish. Is there any stumbling-stone, and rock of offence, to be found, except those which an evil heart of unbelief casts down, for its own fall and destruction? Behold the thousands of your fellow sinners, convinced of their danger, and hastening to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the city of their sure and eternal refuge. Have they occupied the highway to your exclusion? They have not. Yet there is room—room enough for you. Enter upon the road; traverse it in earnestness, simplicity, and fervour, looking to Jesus, as to the tower and strong hold of your salvation. Be assured, that unchangeable mercy and truth, infinite and eternal compassion formed it; and that, like the illimitable love which fills the heart of your Saviour, it can readily receive *all who come to God through him.*

Were waymarks set up, at all obscure or uncertain parts of the way, pointing to the city, and inscribed with its blessed name? And what is our office, as the ministers of the gospel, except to direct the ignorant, and them that are

out of the way, unto him, *who of God is made unto them wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption?* To what more constant or more worthy employ can we aspire, than to cry aloud in your ears, *This is the way, walk ye in it when ye turn to the right hand or to the left?* Be not seduced from the straight forward course. Convinced of your offences, and anxious to flee from the wrath to come, go forward by prayer, by the studying of God's blessed word, by hearing the terms of mercy from the ambassadors for Christ—Go forward thus, in the appointed track of repentance towards God, and faith in his Son. Forget not, that danger and death, and eternal woe are pursuing your flight; and, that if ye turn aside from that road, which alone conducts you to the Redeemer's cross, no other ransom in earth or heaven can buy off the forfeiture of your souls. The avenger of blood will seize them, and the loss will be hopeless and eternal.

Did the gate of the city stand open night and day to afford its gracious shelter to every fugitive? And are you not encouraged to hasten toward him who extends wide the arms of mercy to embrace you? Have you not a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, freely gushing forth to all, as the light or the air of heaven? Not more universal is the dreadful contagion of

human sin, than is the gracious invitation to those who feel and mourn its burden, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Who shall set bounds to that mercy, which, like its almighty author, fills and pervades the universe? Shall one of you, shall the meanest among you, who is this day striving for the salvation of the gospel, fail to obtain it,—fail to find entrance through the gate of the city of refuge, and to be enclosed within the pale of Christ's acceptance? Then must that saying fall to the ground, *Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out:* but, until divine truth shall deceive, that saying is firm and stable as the foundation of heaven, or the dominion of God. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.* When the manslayer stood in the gate, and declared his cause, he was received by the elders, and took his part in the privileges of the city; and had a place that he might dwell there. Come thus to him who waits to be gracious, and who, as he stands forth in the fulness of the appointed redemption, beckons you to approach him, to state your case, to throw yourselves upon his mercy, and to fear no denial.

Was the city of refuge engaged by its very charter and constitution to afford support and nourishment to every one who came within

its hallowed walls? In the city of the living God, which extends wide the gates of its compassion for you, there is bread enough and to spare. There is no blessing which a servant of God can need, no mercy which can form the object of his prayer, no prospect of future good that can mingle with his brightest hopes, which the comprehensive fulness of the gospel does not include. Among the sanctuaries of heathen superstition, the wretched supplicant was often left to perish with hunger, and merely mocked with the shadow of an asylum. Not so within the gracious enclosure of the Redeemer's gospel. There is within that consecrated city the flesh of the Son of God, which he gave for the life of the world. There is that river of the water of life, of which whosoever drinketh shall never thirst. Those who have reached the refuge may live by faith on him, "whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed."

Was the city expressly set apart to be a universal refuge for the stranger, as for one born in the land? In the gospel there is no respect of persons. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female.* No claim is established upon the Redeemer's love beyond the general misery and woe of unpardoned sin. There is no cause of exclusion, except infidelity or love of iniquity in

him who professes to seek the refuge of the cross of Christ. That soul lives not, which is free from the imputation of iniquity, which deserves not the infliction of divine wrath, and which is therefore independent of a Redeemer's death and passion. That soul lives not, which is prevented from casting its hope of salvation in simple faith upon the Son of God, and of being received by him into life eternal.

The cities of refuge were placed within the lot of the tribe of Levi, and appertained to them, in virtue of their sacred office. The sacrificial system alone gave efficacy to their appointment, which was made to depend upon it. So, the plan of salvation, the mercies of the gospel, the whole process of the love of God to man is attached to the Redeemer's priesthood, and derives its power of justification unto life from the virtue of that full and entire oblation which he made upon the cross for the iniquities of men. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.*

Mark then the man, who with every affection of his soul and every impulse of an awakened Spirit, is pressing toward the city of refuge in Jesus Christ. By whom is he pursued? By the violated law, by the injured holiness, by the outraged justice of Almighty God. How if

he be taken, before he reach the place of refuge? He is lost for ever. Does he not hear that warning voice, which sounds in his ear, and falls upon his heart, to scare it from its slumber? He hears it, he feels it smite upon his soul, and he speeds forward until he has reached the city. The foiled avenger follows hard behind: but now he may not inflict the meditated death. He may indeed stand forward as an accuser; but as the executioner of his own wrath he cannot appear. *There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?* The Christian has now an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil, He has now "a strong consolation, having fled for refuge to the hope set before him." Conscience may testify,—the law may plead,—the adversary may accuse, but God will not condemn. If the penitent have sought the city of refuge in the compassions and death of the Son of God, he cannot be taken out of the Almighty hand that hath encompassed his soul from wrath, as if behind ramparts and walls of fire. He must abide the judgment which will undoubtedly be according to righteousness: but he will bring forward his plea, he will refer himself to the conditions of his Redeemer's love and ransom. His cause will be tried, its truth attested, and himself sent

back to that city of safety, where, now and for ever, he shall be with the Lord. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* Flee ye then to the city and sanctuary of your Saviour's grace. He hath shed his blood upon the cross. There look for protection and mercy. He intercedes upon the throne. There approach him. Lay hold on the hope of eternal life. *Come my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy door about thee: hide thyself, as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.*

II. The CONDITIONS upon which the cities of refuge were granted demand a brief consideration. *He who fled thither to avail himself of the privileges which the sacred circle of their walls embraced and conferred, was bound to the performance of some conditions, which, omitted, would have forfeited his claim to their protection, and sent him forth to die beneath the sword of the avenger of blood.*

The offence which he had committed exposed him to the utmost rigour of the law, and gave his life over to the hand of the enemy, unless he could first reach the appointed refuge. He must, therefore, leave all behind, and with unfaltering speed, betake himself to the city. My brethren, one thing is needful. Are you in-

deed, exposed to the curse and penalty of God's stern, impartial law? Is there a refuge, a certain deliverance in the gospel of the atonement of Jesus Christ? If you be overtaken by death, before you reach that sanctuary, will you not be delivered over to the avenger of blood for ever? Thus endangered, will ye not flee thither? Will ye not count all things but loss, that you may win Christ, and be found in him? *Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.*

Imagine the manslayer to have gained the appointed refuge: there must he abide. If he ventured beyond the city, and its allotted limit, he despised the appointment, and the avenger of blood was free to fall upon him, and take his life. The city, its suburb, and pale, provided all the space which one, whose object was to keep his soul in life, and to whom all beside was as fleeting and unsubstantial as the memory of a vision, would find equal to all his wishes. Abide ye, my brethren, in Christ Jesus, your constituted refuge and safety. Go not forth from-under the shadow of his wing, and from the safety of a blessed communion with him. Whither would the patriarch have turned, had he left the ark; and how could he have avoided the resistless onset of the waters? Whither would

the manslayer flee to avoid his foe, if he left the chosen city? And whither can you resort among the ways of worldly conformity, where your salvation will not be endangered? Will no past and painful experience of weakness and evil, no conscious dread of your great adversary, make you careful to abide within the shelter and refuge of an almighty Saviour, that your life may be hid with Christ in God; that you may receive out of his fulness, and obtain grace to help in time of need; that when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, ye also may appear with him in glory. Rejoice in the blessed persuasion, that an all-sufficient Redeemer will guard your eternal interests, and secure your soul. Believe, that while it is your heart's desire, and prayer to God, that you may not be left without his protection, you may exclaim, in a practical acquaintance with the power, love, truth, and faithfulness of him who has undertaken your cause, *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* Endeavour to live by faith. The seaman sees not, indeed, the anchor on which his life wholly depends, when it is fixed at the bottom of the sea: but he has examined the ground on which he has cast it. He rejoices to find it resist the strain, and hopes it

will hold his vessel safely, until the storm be overpast. Confide thus in the living Redeemer, *in whom, though now ye see him not, yet, believing in him, ye may rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

(1.) *Who then is thoughtless, and at ease, unsuspicious of danger, when he should be urging his rapid way toward the city of deliverance?* Oh for a spirit of consideration, to extend its salutary influence over that deluded and endangered soul! Are you calm, tranquil, self-possessed, unalarmed? Look behind you, and see that awful form which is pursuing you, with a rapidity, dreadfully contrasted with your own sloth and negligence. You are, perhaps, imagining that all is well, and, that you have no need of God's appointment for your salvation. You have other reliances—inventions of your own—a provision to resist, to combat, and to overcome the dread avenger, when he shall strike at the everlasting life of your souls. Alas, these creations of a dark and unsanctified imagination, are mere refuges of lies. The broken reeds of Egypt not only failed, but pierced the hands that leaned on them. Pray for the better mind of David. "My soul trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments." *To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts. Prepare to meet*

thy God. Prepare to meet him as an avenger, if ye flee not to him as your sanctuary. Arise, call upon him. *Why sit ye here until ye die?*

(2.) Alas, my brethren, *how certainly, as we look around, must we behold lingerers and loiterers among those who are professedly fleeing toward the refuge of the gospel.* Does the avenger imitate your perverse and misguided procedure? Or is he not following you, surely, though silently, that he may more effectually reach you, and more unerringly pierce you to the heart? Delay not a moment. Approach the city of refuge, with every motion and desire of your spirit. How, if the man-slayer had lingered on his way, in the vague hope that his implacable enemy might not overtake him, or might pass him unnoticed and unharmed? He had surely been put to death—no ransom would have delivered him. And will ye linger, will ye cast yourselves into the way of your enemy, and enable him to lead you captive, and to slay you at his will? O let not those who watch for your souls hear you say, "A little more sleep, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the hands to sleep." *Lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset you. So run that ye may obtain.*

(3.) And ye, who, urged forward by the

mighty influence of God's convincing Spirit, have held onward toward the city of refuge,—Ye, who have entered its open gates, as the manslayer of old rushed within the portals of the appointed city,—Ye, whom Satan may accuse, and sin harass, but whom, except by an act of your own apostacy, they cannot destroy, *will ye not accept the conditions of mercy with thankfulness becoming those who owe to the rich goodness of their God and Saviour, nothing less than their eternal all?* Will ye not abide in him with contented thankfulness; never wandering beyond the boundary of the law of Jesus, nor turning aside into the ways of sin and death? Will ye not patiently remain until the moment of your liberation? Will ye not consecrate, in the best affection of your hearts, the mighty obligation due from you to the compassion of your Saviour? While ye dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places, will ye not bless the munificent hand of Almighty love, which has made a provision so full and so fitting for your present and eternal need? Enjoy your privileges in the city of refuge; but be zealous also to improve them. *Walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory.*

SERMON XIII.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

DEUTERONOMY XXXIV. 5.

So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.

When Elijah was to be translated from his important post of earthly duty to the vision of God, and the bliss of heaven, the sons of the prophets, though they might not walk by his side, and gather the last fragments of his holy converse, to lay them up in their hearts, stood to view afar off, beholding the removal of the man of God, with feelings of uncontrollable awe and wonder. Corresponding feelings must have prevailed among all the faithful within the tents of Israel, when the host lay encamped near the banks of Jordan, and Moses their leader, friend, and intercessor, was about to ascend Mount Nebo, and die. They were indeed forbidden to attend him, at his mysterious re-

moval; but the eye of every individual throughout their tribes must surely have followed him, as he went to meet God upon the hill. Every heart also must have been filled with emotions like those of Elisha, when the Lord took away his earthly head, and he cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

Hitherto we have walked with the prophet, the priest, the king, the mediator of Israel, through the varied circumstances of his eventful life. It is now about to close. Like the sons of the prophets we must stand afar off; yet may we clearly see the solemn transaction, through the medium of the word of God. The end of a man so illustrious in rank, so wonderful in his generation, so important in his character, as the giver of the law, and the type of the eternal Saviour, cannot be regarded by a reflecting mind, without a deep and hallowed interest. Nay, if we consider him, less as the judge of Israel, than as a faithful servant of God, we shall do well to study the instructive lesson of his death. He has gone the way in which we must also follow him. The change which he has experienced, must likewise pass upon us all: and "being dead he yet speaketh," to shew how we may be enabled to fall asleep in the Lord. You are candidates for immortal glory, and the feli-

cities of heaven. What then is the most important wish your souls can form; what should be the subject of your most fervent petition, at the throne of grace? Surely that of Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Behold then, the manner in which such a man terminates his earthly walk; and pray, that ye may be partakers of his grace.

I. The death of Moses is distinguished by AN ENTIRE RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD. If ever there was a period of his public life when his ministry seemed most necessary to Israel, it was surely that of his departure. The chosen tribes were about to enter the land of promise, and receive their allotment within its borders. By whom could this appropriation apparently so well be made, as by him who had hitherto conducted their marches, and arranged their polity, with unequalled prudence and success? If life at any moment could be personally desirable to Moses, it must have been, when his holy toil was about to have its recompence, in the triumph and happiness of the people whom, under God, he had brought to the very borders of Canaan. The final notice of his departure comes upon him with some degree of suddenness. It is brief and startling. "Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto

mount Nebo, and die in the mount whither thou goest up. The summons found him, aged indeed, and, "like a shock of corn, ripe in its season;" but still as strong to labour as in any period of his life. He was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: yet his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. Life therefore, must have been dear to the man of God, when he was called to lay it down, and give an account of that stewardship which he might no longer execute. But Moses was meek above all men. His soul was like a weaned child. His own desires and affections are subdued to the pleasure of his God, and he utters only one language; *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.*

Mark here the influence of true religion; and bless the God of all grace for such an example of its power. Come when he may, the onset of the last enemy is formidable; and few are so bereft of all ties to life, as not to desire its delay. But while the Christian, like Moses, may petition for lengthened days, if they consist with the purposes of heaven, he will make the request with entire deference to the infinite wisdom and goodness on which he relies; *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt.* We are making the voyage of life, like pas-

sengers in a ship. Sleeping or waking, they are proceeding towards their destined port; and will soon reach it, whether they shall have crossed a calm, or a stormy ocean. If God have been the companion of our way, the cross our guiding star, the word of life our chart, the promises of salvation our compass, the love of Christ our constraining impulse, we may well become resigned, should the haven where we would be, open upon us a little before we expected. Or, if the pale horse be sent to bring us to our Father's house, we may surely be submissive, if we be not glad, when he appears. If the earthly tabernacle must be dissolved, in order that "we may have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," we need not shrink, if the signal for its bei ng unclosed for our removal, be given rather unawares. The zealous servant of his God and Saviour will be occupied in his post of duty, committing the period of his removal to the appointment of that providence which allows not a hair of his head to fall unnoticed to the ground. Death may come with an array of suddenness, but unprovided it will not reach him. Let not him who runs the Christian race, with the love of God in his heart, and the glory of heaven in his eye, shrink from reaching the goal too soon. Let not him whom the hand of redeem-

ing love has enclosed within the ark of Christ's salvation, dread the hour when it shall cease from its tossing and conflict with the waters,—when that same hand shall be put forth to open the door, and place the delivered soul upon the summit of the everlasting hills, where not a wave shall agitate it more for ever. The dread of death too frequently arises from the wretched ambition of having our portion in this life—from an undue estimate of this world's good; and an estimate of the eternal world, proportionably mean and unworthy. Our fancy is so much thronged with delusive images of bodily enjoyment and earthly hope, that we imagine the present scene of things the most important by which we can be engaged. The glories of the future state—the vast felicities of the Zion above—the society, the pursuits, the blessedness of the redeemed, and sanctified children of the Son of God—converse with him, and the unclouded vision of his Father in the world of light and love are thus hidden from our minds: we shrink from death, as the worst enemy by whom we can be surprised. *Be ye,* however, *ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.* Do ye not hear his voice in age, weakness, and sickness? Doth he not say, "Surely I come quickly?" Then flee to the ready mercies of that salvation which can alone

scripturally remove the fear of death, and enable you to give in your answer of submission, willingness, and even joyful desire, "Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus." "Give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids," until you have looked for the mercy of the Redeemer unto eternal life. So that, in an acquaintance with the renewing and sanctifying power of his gospel, each of you, as death approaches, may place himself cheerfully at his Father's disposal, and say, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.* Then, and not till then, may you hope, as friends surround your dying bed, and, with the solicitude of Christian love, inquire how you fare, to answer with a servant of God in the like extremity, "Almost well." [1]

II. If it be asked, whence especially proceeded the resignation of Moses? the answer is nigh at hand. HE DIED IN THE VIGOROUS EXERCISE OF FAITH AND HOPE.

He was the child of faith, and to the trust of his parents in the power and love of the God of Israel did he owe the preservation of his life. That life, with one only exception, was a life of uninterrupted and implicit faith. Impelled by this blessed principle, when he was come to

[1] Baxter.

years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and renounced all pretensions to a throne which that title might have offered to his ambition. "By faith he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." Even when he had chosen his portion with the despised heritage, he reserved nothing for himself—no inheritance for his family—no distinction for his posterity—no wealthy lot in the land that flowed with milk and honey. He devoted his posterity to the service of God—to the duties of the altar —to the work of the sanctuary, as their best possession. His last earthly duty is an act of faith; and also an enjoyment of the privilege of faith. At the command of God he ascended to the top of Pisgah, and beheld the glories of Canaan outstretched in magnificent prospect before him. Into this temporal rest he was not permitted to enter: but he received and embraced the promise of an eternal rest, of which Canaan was only the type—*even of that rest that remaineth for the people of God.* He was not to tread the plains of Canaan, nor to ascend into its hills, and towers, and palaces: but they prefigured to the purified and gifted eye of faith,

the regions of unending bliss—the mountain of the paradise above—the bulwarks and temples of that eternal city, whence even the highest cloud of the Shekinah should be removed from before him, that he might see God. His soul was required of him, while he dwelt upon this animating view with delight and rapture. "He died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord;" in the full exercise of that faith which is the life of God in the soul of man, and the only real cause of hope in his closing hour.

Such is the principle by which every obedient follower of God is distinguished; and such the happiness which he is permitted to enjoy in his last conflict. While men walk by sight, rather than by faith—while they are more intent upon present enjoyment, than anxious for the offered glories of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus, they must expect no bright and cheering views of eternity in the end of life. He only who determines to know nothing as the best portion and dearest hope of his soul "save Jesus Christ and him crucified," must hope, as earthly prospects darken around him, to ascend with Moses into the hill of vision, and survey that country and kingdom, which his glorified Saviour, having overcome the sharpness of death, hath opened to all believers. To have devoted

himself and those whom he loves to God, and in preference to every other object of choice, to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,"—to see no glory in earthly things, by reason of the glory that excelleth in heavenly things,—to use this world as not abusing it,—to be dead, and to have only the affections and inclinations of that better being which is hid with Christ in God, is the elevating principle that carries a dying Christian into the mount of faith. It places him upon the far commanding summit of a spiritual Nebo, whence he may discover some bright shadows of the glory that shall be revealed, when faith shall be exchanged for vision. That faith which overcomes the world, also lays aside, at the bottom of the hill, every sin, and the weight that presses down the spirit. It enables a believer to walk upwards cheerfully and quickly, that he may see his approaching happiness, and die in the full persuasion of its consummation. God speaks to a dying Christian, as he spake of old to Jacob when he was to travel into Egypt, "Fear not to go to the grave, I will go down with thee, and I will bring thee up again." While to the wicked there ariseth only a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, "the righteous hath hope in his death." The same hand

which casts a dimness of vanity and worthlessness upon every object of past desire, enjoyment, or carefulness, withdraws the veil that concealed the paradise of God from his eye, and gives him such glimpses of its excellence, its purity, its eternity, as make him long to be absent from the body, that he may be present with the Lord. Now comes the undeniable proof and test of "that good part which he hath chosen, and which cannot be taken from him." The anticipations of faith are now about to be realized: and the country which he has been seeking bursts upon his view with something of that brightness which shall invest it, when he is admitted to dwell within it. Sinking nature, indeed, will look forth and tremble at the prospect of dissolution, although faith may feel the support of the everlasting arms: as he who stands upon a lofty tower may shudder at the depths below him, although the battlements effectually prevent his fall. But if that God and Saviour, whom by a deliberate act of faith he has chosen as his heritage, be with him, he will feel no evil, though he walk through the valley of the shadow of death. *He is now ready to be offered and the time of his departure is at hand, he has fought a good fight, he has finished his course, he has kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of glory, which*

the Lord the righteous Judge shall give him at that day. The higher the sun rises above the earth the more perfectly does it scatter the clouds and darkness which had usurped the sky. And the more firmly the hope of the gospel is established within the soul, the more surely will it be submissive to that decree which comes to remove it into the awful realities of the invisible world—the more effectually will it triumph over the last assault, in that confidence of hope which the grace of faith can alone bestow. *My heart and my flesh fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

III. A resignation thus arising from faith and hope, ENABLED MOSES TO ASCEND MOUNT NEBO, AND, TO DIE IN PEACE AND COMFORT. His conflicts were ended, his trials passed, his temptations withdrawn, his victory well nigh gained; and little was left that could again annoy his departing spirit. His life had been spent in a communion with God, almost uninterrupted—in acts of duty and obedience, the most unreserved, devoted, and universal. His great sin-offering whose propitiation he taught—the Saviour whose reproach he gladly suffered, and in whose atoning sacrifice he firmly believed, had justified him from the sin which yet God had so fearfully rebuked. Thus refreshed in the abundance of that peace which passeth all understanding,

he went to meet his death on Nebo, with the calm chastened triumph of the prophet in after days, when he went forth nearly to the same place, to meet the chariots and horses of fire that were to translate him to heaven. His last earthly duty is performed; his blessing given; his hymn of praise and rapture uttered: and now he hastens joyfully forward to lay his flesh in the grave with hope, and to resign his soul to God who gave it.

Mark then, the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. No cloud obscures his comfort, save that which his own broken and contrite spirit spreads before him; and even through this partial gloom is seen the mercy, and is heard the voice of him who declares to the humble, the penitent, and the believing, *Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee.* He looks back upon the past; and while he mourns over that imperfect and unworthy service, which only the death and intercession of his adorable Lord can induce the pure and holy God to accept at his hands, he still takes comfort in remembering that his best joy and pleasure were in the way of righteousness. *This is his rejoicing, the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity he hath had his conversation in the world.* That Saviour, whose renewing Spirit had already visited him,

sanctified his soul, divorced it from the love of sin, and united it firmly to the love of virtue and holiness, cries to him when his last hour approaches, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself." It has been Christ to him to live; it must be gain, and therefore comfort to him now to die. *O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?* Death comes not to affright him with apprehensions of punishment, as the hand writing on the wall terrified Belshazzar in the midst of his atheistical revel: but as the final struggle approaches, he is supported with the consolations of that promise, *When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee.* Occasionally indeed, death may alarm, when he cannot injure, and the Christian sun may set in clouds, to rise in glory. But generally the effect of righteousness will be quietness and assurance, living and in death. He who passes a life of faith, and usefulness, and holiness, like the admirable Hooker, will usually be permitted to adopt his language at the approach of death. 'I have long been preparing to leave this world, and gathering comfort for the dreadful hour of making my account with God, which I now apprehend to be near, and though I have by his grace loved him in my youth, and feared him

in my age, and laboured to have a conscience void of offence to him and to all men, yet, if thou, O Lord, be extreme to mark what I have done amiss, who can abide it? And therefore where I have failed, Lord, shew mercy unto me; for I plead not my righteousness, but the forgiveness of my unrighteousness, for his merits who died to purchase a pardon for penitent sinners. I am at peace with all men, and God is at peace with me; from which blessed assurance I feel an inward joy which this world can neither give nor take away.' Keep innocency therefore, and take heed to the thing that is right; for that shall bring a man peace at the last. Be followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises: and a gracious God for his Son's sake, whom you have loved and served in the gospel, will enable you to say, with him whose earthly work and expectation were accomplished, when he held the infant Redeemer in his arms, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*

IV. The dying moments of Moses were distinguished by EARNEST ZEAL FOR THE WELFARE OF ISRAEL, AND THE GLORY OF GOD. His latest earthly hours were spent in blessing the people, and instructing his successor Joshua in the arduous duties of his distinguished office. No

envy lingered in his heart, and mingled its bitterness with the trial of approaching death. Praise for mercies given to the tribes of God, prayer for mercies needed by them, and holy anxiety, that when he was himself removed, his mantle might fall upon Joshua, and with it a double portion of his spirit, were his dearest sentiments and employments. His mind was principally in heaven; but all its human feelings were identified with the delightful work of saving Israel. Like the angels on the mysterious ladder of Jacob's vision, he had often ascended to heaven in prayer, on behalf of the people of God, and descended thence a messenger of mercy, pardon, long-suffering, and love. And should that holy zeal now droop and languish into a cold indifference, because he was about to leave them? Or in humble imitation of the incarnate Redeemer, whom he typified, having loved his own, was it not natural, that he should love them to the end, and desire their happiness, their righteousness, their salvation, when he should himself be a saint with God in heaven? Long had it been his meat and drink to do the will of the Most High; and the promotion of Jehovah's glory is even now his last earthly refreshment. And surely, every one that truly loves, and is beloved of God, will be like minded with the leader of Israel. A Christian knows,

that he has passed from death unto life, because he loves the brethren. He knows, that *every one who loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.* Does this holy affection to the author and finisher of his faith deepen and increase, the nearer he draws to that hour, when it shall be consummated in the glory of heaven? It does indeed. He rejoices in the prospect, that others shall enter into his labours, and advance the kingdom of Christ over the hearts of men, when his body is sleeping in death, and his soul reposing from its accomplished warfare, in the rest of heaven. How shall a Christian, passing into immortality more fitly bear testimony to the felicity of religion, than by endeavouring to make it known, appreciated, and loved through all the coming ages of the Redeemer's church? How shall a Christian, so awfully circumstanced, refrain from commending to others the blessings which have been the power of God unto his own salvation? The angels above are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation." They form part of that great cloud of witnesses who behold the difficulties of the Christian conflict. There is joy in their presence over every sinner that repenteth. Surely then, he who is just passing from earth into heaven to become their fellow in bliss, and a

partaker in their emotions, will be zealous for his brethren below, and for their God, even when he can no longer actively minister in their behalf. In heaven the glory of the Redeemer and the advancement of his church will be more accurately estimated, than here upon earth; and therefore a keener interest will be felt towards them by the blessed above. Shall not he then, who hath heaven in his eye, and is about to ascend and dwell with God, find his zeal enlarged and sanctified? Never will one who hath the mind of Christ enter more deeply into the spirit and fervour of that petition, "Thy kingdom come," than when he is himself to share its highest and everlasting privileges. If you would die in holy submission, in faith and hope, in peace and comfort, be zealous for your God in the day of life and strength. Bear witness to his mercy, to the easiness of his yoke, to the lightness of his burden, to the perfect freedom of his service, under all the circumstances of your earthly pilgrimage. And, when the hour of your dismission comes, endeavour to recommend the present and everlasting mercies of a holy and consistent walk with God, through faith in Jesus Christ. Any indifference here pours dishonour upon his salvation, brings discredit upon your own profession, and may tempt him to lead you, with diminished comfort, through the dark and dreary

passage of a dying hour. "Them that honour him, he will honour." Never will a Christian be more filled with all joy and peace in believing, than when, after a life spent in the duties of his station, and in exemplifying the practical influence of salvation by the cross, as the great principle of vital holiness, he adds his last prayers for the peace of Jerusalem; and is enabled to say to the servants of God around him, with that strong confidence of faith which inspired Joseph in his last hour, "I die; and God will surely visit you."

(1.) *The necessity of the gospel is strongly illustrated by the death of Moses.* In one particular Moses offended against the law, and is immediately sentenced to exclusion from Canaan. He might not enter himself to enjoy it, nor might he conduct Israel to possess it. Joshua the deliverer, the appointed leader of the armies of God must finish that work which Moses left undone. Even so must our eternal Joshua, that Almighty deliverer, who saves his people from their sins, provide and bestow the salvation which the law could in no wise effect. "Where the law ends there the Saviour begins. We may see the land of promise by the former, but only Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament can bring us into it."[1] While then you endea-

[1] Bishop Hall's Works, p. 153.

vour to obey the law of God as a rule of life in that ability which his Spirit alone can supply, rely not upon it for justification. Illustrate and practise the duties it marks out; but in your approaches to God, and your plea for acceptance at his hands, rest your hope upon Christ alone, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

(2.) The Israelites mourned for Moses thirty days; but God buried him where no man could find his sepulchre even to this day: and we are taught by the connexion of these two incidents *the use we should make of the death of faithful and zealous ministers, or members of the Redeemer's church.* Well might Israel lament for Moses. The guiding hand, the persuasive tongue, the meek instructor, the holy example, the unslumbering watchman, the unwearied advocate, was called away, and had left them in the wilderness, short of their promised rest. But there was no room for despondency. He who removed one instrument of mercy could provide another. As to his body, that was concealed, lest Satan might tempt the people to worship it and thus commit idolatry against God. Are friends removed from you who have been your helpers in the way of life? Cherish their memory with holy affection, as servants of the Most High God who shewed unto you the way of salvation; but

remember, that God will provide for the wants of his church. Say not therefore in a desponding sense of your loss, as Thomas said, when Lazarus was taken to his rest, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Embalm their virtues in your dearest recollections; but beware lest your veneration and sorrow be idolatrous. They were burning and shining lights, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in their light. The holy flame is extinguished below, only to burn for ever with greater purity and splendour in the courts of the sanctuary above. Friends may die, instructors be removed, but the eternal Jehovah is a Christian's portion. *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*

SERMON XIV.

THE PASSAGE OF JORDAN.

JOSHUA III. 17.

And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

It is easy to imagine the emotions with which a mariner, after being exposed to all the perils of the deep, in a long and eventful voyage, would reach a port in the immediate neighbourhood of his own land, where, after one more brief passage, he might expect to arrive in safety, and to rest from his toils and dangers, amidst the enjoyments and charities of home.

With kindred feelings, but still more powerfully excited, may we conceive the tribes of Israel to have been agitated, when they turned their backs upon the wilderness, and stood upon

the brink of Jordan. The angel of the Lord, had led them forth from Egypt with a mighty hand. Their trials had been great, their enemies numerous and warlike. They had marched through a howling desert, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought: but an Almighty arm had defended them; an all-sufficient God had supplied them. The bread they ate, the water they drank, the guide they followed—all were miraculous. They had rebelled, and were chastised. They had repented, and were spared. They had indeed, lost their great leader and lawgiver Moses; but the Spirit of the Lord rested upon his successor Joshua. His spies had returned from Jericho, with reports calculated to cheer and animate the people. Their pilgrimage now drew near to its close. One effort more would enable them to cross the river, and stand within the promised land, bearing testimony to the accomplished engagements, and immutable faithfulness of God.

If our hearts have burned within us while we accompanied them through the wilderness, we shall not withdraw our interest from the miraculous passage of their armies over Jordan. Hitherto the parallel between the marches of Israel, and the spiritual circumstances of Christian life, has been easy and obvious. Nor will it fail us here. The transaction before us

occupies two chapters of the history. In the third is described

I. THE PASSAGE OF THE RIVER JORDAN.

In the fourth,

II. THE MEMORIALS ERECTED BY JOSHUA AND THE MEN OF ISRAEL.

I. As objects in the natural world assume different modifications of form and colour, according to the lights in which they stand, and the positions in which they are viewed, so do the instructive histories of the word of God, and, not least, the incident under our consideration.

(1.) *It may be viewed as a subject for moral and religious reflection.* Hitherto the marches of Israel had been conducted by the pillar of cloud, and of fire. They were now to follow another guide. The officers went through the host; and they commanded the people, saying, "When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites bearing it, then shall ye remove from your place, and go after it." Thus were the people to be guided through Jordan, into the borders of Canaan.

Difficulties exist in the Christian life, like those of the Israelites, when they stood by the swollen river. There are moments of doubt and darkness, in which the servants of God are compelled to cry, to their Saviour, as he in

Dothan to the prophet, "Alas, Master, how shall we do!" Is such the state, and such the pleading of any here? Follow the ark of God. Go to that word which he hath given, as "a light to your feet and a lantern to your paths." Look to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, as a guide, not less than a propitiation. Exclaim with Moses, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence;" and expect to receive the promise made to prayer, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." *Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and he will bring it to pass. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths.* Hath he not said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world?" Is not his declaration sure, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee?" Take no step in life without a presiding aim to magnify the riches of providential and redeeming mercy. The ark of God will then precede you, his written word and unerring Spirit will give you a right judgment, and lead you to a right decision in all things. If you tread the dark mountains, your feet shall not stumble; if you walk through the trackless depths of the river, even there will the right hand of God lead you.

Keep your eye upon the ark; and if your way be pointed out by the gospel of Christ, and re-

commended to you by the influences of the Holy Ghost, fear not to pursue it. *God will lead the blind by a way that they know not: he will make darkness light, and crooked things straight before them.*

In this transaction however, the Israelites were to follow the symbol of God's power and presence, at a suitable distance. "There shall be a space between you and the ark, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near it." We need, we greatly need the same salutary caution impressed upon our hearts, by the renewing and transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Surely the man who fears God, and trembles at his word, must observe with pain the careless levity with which so many approach the secrets of his throne, and the profane familiarity with which they explore the depths of his hidden counsels. Was the presumption of Uzzah punished with death, when he put forth his hand, in well meant, but unbidden zeal to support the ark? Did the men of Bethshemesh perish, because they presumed to look into it without permission? Shall we then approach it with unhallowed boldness? Would it be more easy to dry up the waters of the ocean, and to examine the secrets of its depths, than to understand those mysteries of God for the salvation of a condemned and dying world, into which an-

gels desire to look? If so, it should suffice our inquiries into the unsearchable riches of Christ, that we know the way to his cross, that we are renewed by his Spirit, that we are transformed into his likeness, that we delight in the holy way of his commandments, and rejoice in hope of the bliss of his eternal rest. Be contented and grateful. Follow the ark at reverential distance, and walk humbly with your God. So shall the darkness pass away, and the true light shine upon you; until, become new creatures in Christ Jesus, you have each obtained that experimental wisdom, which, on this side heaven is man's best and dearest possession; *One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.*

If the Israelites had crowded round the ark, their very nearness would have concealed it, and thus defeated its office of guiding their march according to the intention of the Most High. The caution was therefore issued with reference to this particular danger. "Come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore." As he who affects to look upon the sun with a steadfast eye will be dazzled with its excessive effulgence, and be unable to see his way, so will the eyes of that man's mind be darkened, who endeavours to be wise above what is written, and to fathom

the depths of an incomprehensible God, with the scanty line of his own reason. He will not discover his character and danger as a transgressor—nor the requirements of God—nor the provisions of eternal love for his salvation—nor the way of holy duty—nor the path of life and blessedness. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding.* There is a point, beyond which human wisdom cannot pierce. *We have nothing wherewith to draw, and the well is deep.* Learn then, to walk by faith, not by sight. *Secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children.* Pray for spiritual knowledge, with fervour becoming your need of the gift. If ye would succeed at the mercy-seat, "be not wise in your own conceits." "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread:" and many who seek knowledge in the spirit of profane and daring cavil, instead of discovering the truth as it is in Jesus, wrest the scriptures to their own destruction. *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way. I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Futher, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* Ye are passing

by a way which ye have not passed heretofore. Ye know not one step, save as the word of truth and the Spirit of Christ inform you. Forsake not then, the only, but the infallible guide. *Search the Scriptures.* Pray for heavenly light upon their pages: but pass not the appointed bounds of inquiry; lest the ark be hidden from your view; and lest, forsaking the grace and knowledge of salvation, you "walk in the sight of your own eyes, and in the imagination of your own hearts," until ye learn at length, in the present delusion, in the future obduracy, and in the final condemnation of the infidel, that 'the very light which was in you was darkness.'

When the officers had given their preliminary directions to the people, Joshua said unto them, "Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." In all probability, this order involved more than purification from ceremonial defilement. Now what doth it teach us? Surely, that we should prepare to receive our father's mercy, by putting away the defilement of all iniquity. It may be said, that the unspeakable and unimaginable blessings purchased by the cross are freely bestowed upon guilty transgressors. I fully believe it; and as my soul's only resting place, and refuge from despair, I cling to the assurance, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." But

every page of this very proclamation of mercy testifies by a voice from the throne of truth in heaven, that while men live in the wilful commission of any sin, they turn their backs upon the provisions of God's compassion in his Son, with scorn and defiance.

At this season of the year, the river, near which the tribes of Israel lay encamped, being increased by the melted snows from the neighbouring summits of Lebanon, overflowed its banks, and made the difficulty of crossing it more formidable than usual. Yet, no sooner did its waters feel the feet of the priests that bare the ark, than they were divided. The armies of Israel passed through dryshod; and not an individual of all their multitudes perished. The miracle became thus more amazing—the power by which it was wrought more undeniable. And, to what end are the trials sent, by which the servants of God are beset in their heavenward way; the afflicting providences that befal them; and the circumstances of almost hopeless difficulty in which they often find themselves entangled? Surely, that the interference of the Most High, and the might of an omnipotent Saviour may be most effectually exhibited in their deliverance. Are the three children of the captivity to be cast into the fiery furnace? It is heated seven times more than on

other occasions. Why? That the preservation may be more astonishing: and that the king may bless the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Is Lazarus laid in the grave, and when our Saviour comes, does his resurrection seem impossible? "Lord by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." Why is this, but for a more undeniable display of the Redeemer's power? "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Do I address the tried, the tempted, or the suffering? Do not faint beneath your burdens. *In your patience possess ye your souls.* "You have the sentence of death in yourselves, that you should not trust in yourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead." He will make it appear that your good, and his own glory were intimately concerned in your afflictions. *As your day is so shall your strength be. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.* Jordan may overflow his banks: but the ark will go before your way, and the waters will be divided. After having tempered his providences according to your ability, God will, "with the temptation, make a way for you to escape." And when ye have come up from the depths, he will raise

your hearts to him in the adoring wonder of grateful love, for the omnipotence of the support, and the completeness of the deliverance.

(2.) *The miracle may also be regarded, as a subject of emblematical reference.* Joshua the leader of Israel has been universally considered as a type of Jesus Christ, the head and captain of our salvation. His glorious office of leading the chosen tribes into the land of promise, remarkably prefigured the gracious work of that Lord whose name he bore, and who, having "overcome the sharpness of death, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Look then, in imagination upon the thousands of Israel passing through the river, with one part of its waters flowing on towards the Dead Sea, and the other piled up, and held back, by the almighty hand of God, until all the people had clean passed over. Then say, whether they do not fitly illustrate the walk of a Christian through that dark and dreary stream which separates time from eternity, probationary grace from consummated glory; and the spirit of a holy believer from the vision of his Saviour. If the ark had not preceded the hosts of Israel, they would have perished in attempting the passage, for there were no other means of crossing the stream. The deep would utterly have overwhelmed them. Their destruction would have

been as entire, as that of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; and not one would have entered Canaan. But the Lord of the whole earth went before them. *The sea saw that and fled; Jordan was driven back;* and his depths became a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. We must all cross the tremendous boundary between earth and heaven. *It is appointed unto all men once to die.* Are we following the ark? Is God in our camp? Are we looking to a mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of his Son. Surveying that Son in the matchless glories of his character, and as "able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him," can we appropriate him and his salvation to ourselves by faith, and say, "This God is my God for ever and ever?" Then may we hear that voice which addresses the dying Christian, *When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee.* Did Christ rebuke the storm, when the trembling disciples awoke him, saying, "Lord, save us, we perish?" Were they compelled to cry, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" and is he from his throne of dominion in heaven less mighty now to save? Death is an awful termination of Christian warfare. The conflict with the last enemy is a stern trial of faith, and hope, and strength, and pa-

tience. Yet remember for your comfort, when you must tread the depths and darkness of this mystical river, that if ye have followed the pillar of cloud through the wilderness, and are fixing your eyes on the ark of mercy in the Saviour, he is passed on before you. Fear not ye to follow. Rather cry with Peter, when in earnest desire to be with his master he thought not of the darkness, the howling of the wind, or the tossing of the waves, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the water." Ignorance is always a condition of terror. Death is a way which no man hath gone, save in the last hour of his warfare and conflict. But, Israel would feel the hitherto untrodden paths of Jordan less dreadful, when they followed the ark, as the seaman goes through the perils of the mighty deep with cheerfulness and hope, while his course is guided by the magnet. Even so, may the departing Christian walk through the valley of the shadow of death, fearing no evil, if God be with him, if the Rod and Staff of Emmanuel comfort and uphold him.

"Jesus Christ hath overcome death, and him that had the power of death." Appeal then to his mercy; lay hold on his salvation. Follow him, in the faith that cleaves to his cross, as the only atonement, and to his commands, as the perfect rule of life, and to his almighty love, as the

well-spring of present comfort and eternal hope; —just as Israel followed the ark which exhibited the symbol of propitiated justice on the mercy-seat, the tables of the law, and the sacrament of manna. So shall you experience his faithfulness in death; and, however fierce the conflict, you shall finally be made more than conquerors. Was an Israelite left in the bed of the river? Not one. And shall the least and humblest believer, whom the love of Christ crucified has won from Satan unto God, be deserted in the darkness of the grave, while the waters of eternal forgetfulness pass over his head? Shall he perish for ever? It cannot be. *Death will be swallowed up in victory: and them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* The trial may be severe; but to a servant of God and an obedient child of his love, the issue cannot be doubtful. *Some on planks, and some on broken pieces of the ship: and so it came to pass, that they all escaped to land.*

II. A deliverance so mighty, a miracle of mercy so unequalled, except by the passage through the Red Sea, called for the lasting gratitude of Joshua, and the men of Israel. The next chapter, therefore, describes the apt and significant MEMORIALS erected by them.

(1.) Twelve stones were set up, probably on a basement of masonry, in the midst of Jordan,

where the feet of the priests that bare the ark stood, during the passage of the people through the terrific channel of the river. And shall not the Christian, "washed, justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,"—carried through the deep waters of trial, but yet borne up triumphantly, preserve a grateful record of his mercies; and, as he builds the memorial in his heart, inscribe it with the name of Ebenezer, and say, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me?" Are you in suffering or sorrow of mind, body, or estate? *Let tribulation work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.* Thus shall you take occasion to erect a trophy to the love of your Redeemer, the work of his Spirit, the wisdom of his providence, the riches of his grace. Nay, these elements of abiding thankfulness shall be taken from the very scenes and circumstances of your sorrow, as the stones were put together in that part of Jordan, where the passage seemed most formidable.

Are you called to conflict with death. Be consoled, amidst the visitations of pain, by reflecting that your sickness is not unto death eternal, but for the glory of God; that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Are you zealously following the ark of his presence, in the appointed method of salvation? Then,

even in death itself—even amidst its natural gloom, and the horror with which it is invested, you shall raise a memorial of thankfulness to the praise of the everlasting Trinity. Fear not to die. Expect comfort, hope, peace, and joy, even in the terrors of the last onset against your soul. You shall have strength from on high, and supports to your fainting heart, so palpably from above, as to make you know, that He is with you of a truth. God, who hath led you all your life long—whose providence filled and crowned your cup with blessings—"whose goodness and mercy have followed you all your days," will, at their close, enable you to glorify him, for the abundance of his consolations, and the all-sufficiency of his help. You shall know whom you have believed; and never, in the warfare of your earthly pilgrimage, will the salvation with which he has visited you, be more triumphantly displayed, or more thankfully recorded, than at the moment, when, subdued by pain, sinking in the struggle, and going down to the grave, you reckon by the unerring calculation of a Christian's faith, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in you." *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law:*

but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2.) In addition, however, to the monument erected in Jordan itself, Joshua caused the people to bring twelve stones from its bed, and to build a memorial with them to God, in the land of Canaan. And what, suppose ye, will be the conduct of a faithful, holy Christian, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and his feet shall stand within the borders of the Canaan above, his inheritance for ever, the eternal possession and rest of his liberated spirit? Will no adoring recollection of infinite love arise within his heart? Will the providences that befel him on earth—the grace that called him from sin to holiness—the fountain opened for all uncleanness—the pleadings and consolations of the Holy Spirit—the sanctification of affliction; and, though last, not least, the mercies vouchsafed to him in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, fade away from his memory, and be forgotten during the ages of everlasting bliss? They will not. The very depths of Jordan—his greatest earthly afflictions shall furnish materials for his theme of eternal praise, amidst the harmonies and rapture of the blessed. The very joys of his Father's house, the very glories of his Father's kingdom, will probably derive new value, new

blessedness, new aspects of delight, from the love enkindled within him by references to those earthly tribulations, in which his Saviour most surely, though most mysteriously advanced his meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Does he eat of the hidden manna, even of the new corn, in the land of promise above? Will it not then refresh him with an additional sweetness, to remember, that when hungering and thirsting for righteousness, he was led to him, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed? When he drinks of the fruit of the vine, pure and new in the paradise above, will it not be made more delightful by his reflection upon that period, when his spirit fainted for the waters of life, and the rock was smitten, and they gushed forth, and he drank of that rock, as it followed him through the wilderness, *and that rock was Christ.* When he feels the principles of everlasting life and blessedness, springing up within his spirit, and death vanquished with an eternal overthrow, will he not find even that life, and glory, and triumph, more living, more glorious, more triumphant, by contrasting them with the period, when he lay bitten by the fiery serpent, without hope of escape from death, until the spirit of truth directed him to the Son of Man, lifted up upon the cross, and gave him

faith to appropriate the mercies of a dying Redeemer to his deliverance, and strength, and salvation. Is he admitted to the heavenly Canaan, the glory of all lands, there to reign as a king, and a priest, on the throne, and in the temple above? Will no increase, therefore, to the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore, arise, from comparing them with the dreary passage from mortal to immortality? Not more surely do the storms and tempests, danger and death, through which the mariner has passed enhance the value of his safety, than will every trial of life, and the terrors of the final struggle, enlarge, and deepen, and endear, the sanctuary of eternal bliss and glory, to the spirits of just men made perfect. No *affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous.* Death appears formidable and dreadful: but the regions of perfection and repose, love and bliss, lie beyond it. Once entered there, *the light affliction which is but for a moment will be found to have wrought for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* That glory itself shall appear to your eyes in more brilliant hues, by being opposed to the darkness of your earthly dispensations, the passing clouds of temporal affliction, and the brief, though gloomy hours of sickness,

decay, and even death itself; as the glories of the rainbow shine with additional fulness, by contrast with the passing storm and darkness of the lowering heaven.

I should unworthily and imperfectly close this subject, were I not to entreat your attention to one singular feature of the wonderful transaction. *Salvation is of God alone. The work, the praise, the honour are due exclusively to him.* The waters were cut off before the ark. They divided, when it approached. They acknowledged the presence of Jehovah, and never attempted to invade the protection which it gave to the passing armies. The strength, device, or wisdom of Israel, could not have effected a passage: and, to glory in their own success, under such circumstances, would have displayed the very frenzy of pride, impiety, and ingratitude. Vainly would Moses have waved his hand at the Red Sea, if Almighty power had not gifted his rod with energy to divide it. Vainly would Joshua have commanded the waves of Jordan to retire, if the ark had not preceded him. We have destroyed ourselves. Sin cannot be vanquished, nor holiness attained, nor death subdued, except by the effectual grace of our victorious Saviour. Did the Lord then magnify Joshua in the sight of Israel, by

making him the instrument of this mighty deliverance? And shall not the Christian adore and bless that Mediator, of whom the leader of the chosen heritage was only a shadowy type? Shall he not renounce every self complacent thought; remembering, that *he is saved by grace, through faith, and that not of himself, for it is the gift of God? Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name give glory.* In heaven the redeemed cast their crowns before the throne, saying, *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.* The same, though feebly sung, will also be the Christian's hymn of earthly praise. Thou, O Son of the Father, hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. In life, in death, and through eternal ages, should we praise thy love, and make it the subject of our exclusive boast. *God forbid that I should glory, save only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!*

The stones of memorial to be set up in Canaan were drawn from the very place where the feet of the priests stood firm, and the ark rested in the midst of Jordan. Our dearest recollections of salvation, in its principles of grace below, and in its consummation of glory, in the final rest, should be derived,—

and if we reach that rest they will be derived, from the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and from the ark of his redemption. Doubly delightful, indeed, will they be for coming through such a medium. *Lord dost thou wash my feet? Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!*

SERMON XV.

JERICHO TAKEN.

JOSHUA VI. 20.

So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

WHEN the Israelites had been delivered from the yoke of Egypt, had passed through the wilderness, and had entered Canaan, their inheritance, though secured by the unchangeable truth of God, was still to be won in battle from the devoted nations. The Christian, made free by the power of the Eternal Son, may have forsaken the house of his spiritual bondage. He may be virtually admitted within the borders of the promised land, by a participation in that gracious adoption, which testifies that he is a child of God, *and if a child, then an heir, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ.* Will his warfare then have ceased, the moment he is

interested in the covenant of redemption, by having fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel? Will he not rather enter upon that succession of conflicts against the principalities and powers of sin, which must cease only when he shall rest in the bliss of heaven, and obtain "the prize of his calling of God in Christ Jesus?" Such, at least, are the representations of Scripture, and such the experience of all who have been arrayed beneath the Redeemer's banner. In fact, no sooner had the Israelites crossed the river which lay between the wilderness and Canaan, renewed their covenant with the Most High by the rite of circumcision, commemorated their deliverance, and the type of that atonement which was to be made for sin, by eating the passover, than they were called to attack Jericho, and utterly to destroy the city. This siege was the first of a series of contests, in which they were long engaged. I know not indeed, that any Scripture regards the conquest of Jericho as an absolute type of a Christian's victory gained over the enemies of his salvation, by the blood of the Lamb. The analogy of faith however, seems to view it, as an event strongly illustrative of this glorious subject; and thus indeed it has been regarded by commentators upon holy writ in all ages of the church. Among the many peculiarities by which

this great event is characterized, it affords an instructive display,

I. Of the conduct of Israel.

II. Of the conduct of God.

I. If an adept in the military art had been consulted upon the best mode of conducting the siege, and of subduing the city, he would undoubtedly have suggested all the usual resources of war. He would have persuaded Joshua to surround it with a trench; to cast up a bank against it; to shake its walls and bulwarks by the most powerful engines that could be procured; or to overthrow them by the secret device of the mine beneath them. He would have cried, 'Let its defenders be unceasingly attacked by the strength of the warrior's harness, the sharpness of his sword, or the might of his arm, until they should be slain or overcome.' Such advice would have been most natural and judicious, had the Israelites been placed in circumstances requiring no other intervention, than that of visible and secondary causes. But in this first conflict with the dreaded race of Anak, the Lord determined manifestly to fight and conquer for them. Aware also, of that deeply seated presumption, which, in the event of success would have induced them to cry, in total forgetfulness of the Lord of Hosts, "Our sword, and the might

of our arm, hath gotten us the victory," he resolved to deliver the city into their hands, in a manner which should at once mock the boasted devices of men, and exhibit the Almighty power of God, working by an agency, to human apprehension altogether inadequate and inappropriate. "The Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. And ye shall compass the city all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus thou shalt do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of ram's horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times; and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat; and the people shall ascend up, every man straight before him."

(1.) *To this command the Israelites paid implicit obedience.*

Every part of this mysterious order could not fail to contradict the expectation, and excite the astonishment of the people. Was not a single weapon of offence to be employed? Would the tread of the host, or the trumpets of the priests,

as they went their appointed circuit, shake the solid walls, and overthrow them to their foundations? Was there any visible or imaginable connexion between the means and the end? Were not the appointments of God calculated rather to make them objects of mockery and scorn, than of terror to their enemies? To the eye of sense they surely were: yet no sooner did Joshua give the command, than it was implicitly obeyed. The priests, the ark, the armed people, compassed the city. Their duty also, was not only *unreservedly*, but *perseveringly* performed. They continued in the use of the instituted means, through the whole seven days, without the recorded expression of a murmur, or the exhibition of rebellious impatience. Their own views might be opposed, and the derision of their enemies excited; but patience had her perfect work; and they desisted not, until Jericho was taken.

The Christian soldier is called to engage in war against hosts of spiritual enemies. God hath placed him on the lists, and promised him the victory: but the means, by which it is to be achieved, appear to the dark and distorted apprehension of natural man unfit to secure the end. 'Am I not,' enquires the philosopher in religion, 'endowed with reason to distinguish between the evil and the good, with judgment

to prefer, with affections to love the one, and to avoid the other? Are not the principles of moral duty so plainly and comprehensively written in the heart of man that they cannot easily be mistaken? What doth the Lord require, but what he has given me ample ability to perform? Why may I not therefore work out my own salvation, independently of any supernatural interference? How are the provisions of the gospel suited to my necessity? If I really be defiled by sin, and under the wrath of God, can my pardon be bought, my atonement made, my reconciliation effected, by means of the death of Christ? Am I so dead in trespasses and sins, as to be wholly powerless towards any holy and godly dispositions; and must some strange transformation pass upon me, to make me spiritually a new creature? Where then is my freedom of moral agency: and how can I be rewarded or punished, according to a righteous judgment at the bar of God? If the Scriptures faithfully declare my condition, yet what virtue can there be in the ordinances of religion—what hidden connexion between baptism and the regeneration of the spirit; between the bread and wine of the Supper of the Lord, and the strengthening and refreshing of my soul by the body and blood of Christ? Can prayer, or the preaching of the gospel, or the reading of the word, be instru-

mental in transforming me into the likeness of the children of God? It cannot be.' Alas, there are thousands in this land and day of light —thousands, upon whom infinite compassion is pressing the mercies of salvation, by the doctrine of Christ crucified, who reason thus, and, in the pride of their hearts sport themselves with their own deceivings. The spirit of Naaman, when he received the prophet's message is still widely spread throughout the world, as men compare the salvation they would choose, with that which the unfathomable love of God has provided in his Son. *Are not Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel; may I not wash in them and be clean?* 'Folly and pride strive for place in a natural heart, and it is hard to say, whether is most predominant; folly, in measuring the power of God's ordinances by the rule of human discourse and ordinary event; pride, in a scornful valuation of God opposed to our own devices.'[1] A divine influence, however, strove with Naaman's heart and prevailed. He listened to the wiser suggestions of his servants; he washed seven times in Jordan; "and his flesh came again, like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." If the Israelites had attempted to conquer Jericho after their own manner, and with

[1] Bishop Hall's Works, II. 50.

their own weapons, in opposition to the command of God, they would have found it as invincible, as was the throne of heaven to the fallen spirits who would have usurped it. They had the gracious wisdom given them to resign their own will and plan, to the appointed means of their Almighty leader; and they were blessed in their deed. If the blind man who besought the mercy of our blessed Lord, had been offended, when Jesus made clay with spittle to anoint his eyes, because the method of cure seemed improbable; or, if others had withdrawn him on the same account from beneath the Saviour's hand, he had gone down to the grave in hopeless darkness. He endured the application, he washed, at the bidding of Christ, in the pool of Siloam: and he returned to behold, and to adore the gracious Redeemer, who had appointed the means of restoration, and blessed him with sight in the use of them.

The manner in which you are encouraged to hope for victory over sin, is expressly declared by God in his holy word. There is a "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." Thither must you come, with the pollution that rests upon you. There must you be found—not once, not twice, not interruptedly, but constantly, unceasingly, perseveringly, like him at the pool of Bethesda. There is an atonement made on the cross for your transgression. In that

must you glory; and seek *to be found in Christ, not having your own righteousness which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* There is salvation in no other—to no other refuge must you flee. God requires at your hands a sanctification of character, which the Almighty agency of his Holy Spirit can alone produce. On that Spirit must you depend: to him must you seek, with every desire of the heart, if you look to be quickened to run the way of God's commandments. The mode of obtaining these mercies is as plainly declared in scripture, as your need of the mercies themselves. Be diligent in the ordinances of religion, approach God in prayer, and study his holy word. Do not faint or fail, or intermit. Consult not with flesh and blood: ask not with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" Turn not away, if ye should not wholly understand them. Never prefer to walk by the slender taper and crooked line of your own understanding: but in that precise manner in which it has pleased the Father of mercies to reveal salvation, receive it with bended knees, humbled minds, adoring spirits. The champion might enter the lists in the ancient games, and take his part in the contest, yet was he not crowned, except he strove lawfully. Men may seem to be in earnest to

obtain eternal life; but, if they will not consent to the terms on which it is imparted, they will as surely fail of success, as would the disciples, if they had cast the net on the left side of the ship, when Jesus had directed it to be thrown on the right. A transgressor commanded to repent and believe the gospel, whose heart has responded to the call of mercy, may not understand the meaning of all its requisitions, or the exact method in which the eternal author can supply all his need: but let him be found in humble and diligent use of means, and *he shall know, if he follow on to know the Lord.* The wisdom of the manner in which we are to obtain salvation may not run parallel with our own device: but if, through divine grace, we should "cast down imaginations, and every high thought that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls," we shall own, amidst the disclosures of unclouded light and unbroken bliss, that, *as the heaven is higher than the earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.*

(2.) An obedience so entire and uncompromising, must have proceeded from some principle of no common efficacy. *That principle was a full persuasion of the truth of God in his*

promise of victory over Jericho. Such, at least, was the testimony of St. Paul. "By *faith* the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been compassed about seven days."[1] A vivid recollection of mercies past—an ample experience of divine fidelity—a conviction that the Lord had never pledged the truth of his word without redeeming it, induced the tribes of Israel to believe, that, strange as his procedure might appear, it would be explained and justified by the event. Thus persuaded, they compassed the city, as they were commanded. They led the ark of God in frequent circuit round the walls of Jericho. They blew with trumpets, and shouted with the voice of all the host. They wrought their mysterious labour through the whole allotted period, with a patient continuance in well doing. They practised no device of their own, but implicitly believed that success was to be expected only in following the directions of the Most High. Thus also does faith embrace the gospel, and acquiesce in its requirements. The way of faith is often opposed to the path of sense; and he who would tread the one, must frequently forsake the other. Hath God in his word enjoined you to embrace the gospel; and does the scheme of his mercy transcend your imagina-

[1] Hebrews xi. 30.

tion? Endeavour to realize him as the God of love, who gave his only Son for your ransom: and then ye may be persuaded, that the whole plan of his mercy is best suited to your condition. Aspire to believe, that all his promises are immutably sure—that if he have spoken good concerning you, he will in due time accomplish it. You will in the same degree be enabled to subdue your own reason to his command; and combating in his strength, and by his direction, you will at length *receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.* To this divine principle within the heart, were the saints of old indebted for their victory over the world, as Israel for their conquest of Jericho. God has invested it with especial honour. He seems almost to consider it the master-piece of religion, which achieves the greatest triumph over sin; as the commander of the host is most renowned in the victory, though his soldiers fought the battle by his side, and under his direction. Would ye then display that holy obedience which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ requires at your hands? Would ye be strengthened for the war, and enabled to persevere unto the end? Endeavour and pray, that ye may be rooted and built up in the faith and hope of the gospel. *If thou canst believe, all things are possible unto him that believeth.*

This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

II. "Two cannot walk together except they be agreed." In this instance a delightful harmony existed between the obedience of Israel, and the blessing with which it was repaid by the Most High.

Mark then 2ndly, THE CONDUCT OF GOD.

(1.) In keeping his commandments there is great reward; and the transaction now before us exhibits *a striking instance of divine power and faithfulness displayed towards his obedient people.* When Jericho had been compassed seven days, "and the priests blew with the trumpets, and shouted with a great shout on the seventh, the walls fell flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city." The word of the Lord had so declared; and "God was not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of man that he should repent." An Almighty energy accompanied the sounding of the trumpets, and the cry of the people. Before that secret power the defences of Jericho fell, so that not one stone was left upon another, and the conquest of the devoted city was at once secure and easy. How stupendous must this miracle have appeared in the eyes of Israel! How triumphantly did it vindicate the truth of that promise unto Joshua,

"See I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour!" Here was a proof which might not be contradicted, that Almighty power was present to bless an obedient depending use of appointed ordinances, and to establish the wisdom of the means ordained for the capture of Jericho. The trumpets sounded by the priests are universally supposed to be the same with those which proclaimed the great jubilee, as indeed their name imports,[1] and they performed their wondrous office to the very letter.

The preaching of the cross "is to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who believe, it is Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." When the apostles first sounded the Jubilee trumpets of that gospel, as they went round the strong holds of human depravity, idolatry, superstition, and all the nameless abominations of the heathen world, their victory seemed as impossible, as that of Israel with their marches and blasts of horns against the walls of Jericho. Had these first soldiers of Christ regarded only the human probabilities of success, they would have resigned their office in despair; instead of going "into all the world and preaching the gospel to

[1] They were probably called Ram's horns, from a resemblance to them in shape.

every creature." But they believed God, that it should be according to the word of their risen and glorified master. They believed, that he would be with them even unto the end of the world. Thus upheld, apparently feeble as their powers were, they went cheerfully forth: and lo, God bare them witness through the Holy Ghost, by signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. From the day of pentecost, the first fruits of the gospel harvest, to the present hour, the doctrine of the cross has been the instrument in the hand of the Spirit of God, to subdue the powers of evil, and to win souls from the death of sin to the life of salvation, through Jesus Christ. Such are the means still used to achieve the triumphs of the Redeemer's kingdom. But surely the treasures of mercy so proclaimed are sent in earthen vessels. Surely these victories owe nothing to the skill, or ability of those employed in winning them. If an archangel were to sound the trumpet of the gospel, and to cry with the loudness and sweetness of a voice that might give tone to the choirs of heaven, his mere message would not throw down the bulwarks which the love of sin has erected in the human heart. The Almighty power of God must destroy them, in the fulness of his Son's promise, *I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.* Depending upon that promise,

and assured, that, however feeble and unworthy, our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, do we come to you, sound in your ears the trumpet of the gospel jubilee, and cry to every one whom it may reach, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* Thus must we endeavour to continue, if the fruit of our labour do not soon appear, waiting in faith and patience that time when the grace of the Holy Ghost shall commend the word of salvation to your hearts, and turn you from the power of Satan unto God. Willingly would we believe, and gladly do we hope, that he has not left himself without witness to the efficacy of his gospel, in taking away from some among you the stony heart of unbelief, and giving you a heart of flesh, to love and serve him. To whom then is the glory of success due? Surely there comes in answer a voice from the page of eternal truth, *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Be ye then persuaded to hear the preaching of the gospel with all humility and readiness of mind, as an ordinance sanctified by divine wisdom and love, to destroy the dominion which sin may have usurped over you, and to bring you in the holy obedience of Christian faith, beneath the mild and merciful yoke of redeeming love. So shall the ark of God be present while the sound of

his word is uttered to you. So shall he give efficacy to the preaching of the cross, "and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." So shall you experience the blessing of attendance upon the ordinances of salvation; until, the impenitent and unbelieving principles of your nature being subjugated and overthrown, by the gospel and grace of Christ, you shall become temples of the Holy Ghost, and habitations of God through the Spirit.

(2.) The righteous conduct of the Most High was also exemplified *by a signal act of discriminating justice, at the taking of Jericho.*

The city itself was utterly destroyed, and its inhabitants, one family alone excepted, perished to a man by the edge of the sword. Doubtless the people had indulged themselves in scornful mirth and mockery at the means adopted by the men of Israel to vanquish and subdue their city. But the limited time had no sooner expired, than the rein was given to exterminating judgment, and they died in their iniquities. When the wicked say *Peace, peace, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they cannot escape.* In this day of salvation, the long suffering of God waits to lead us to repentance. Six days, as it were, does he surround us, and proclaim in our ears the tidings of reconciliation, by the death

of Christ, and sanctification by his grace, and peace and hope and life eternal. But the seventh day, the sabbath of his wrath will come. Not more surely did vengeance reach the cities of the plain, when they had filled up the appointed circle of their guilt, and his forbearance —not more inevitably did the deluge overwhelm the offenders of the old world, when the hundred and twenty years of their probation had expired, than will the revelation of the righteous judgment of God be made against those who have rejected the message of his love, and the offers of his Son. "The wicked will then be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Do any of you turn a deaf ear to the solicitations of his love, in the gospel of Jesus Christ? Anticipate the day of universal retribution, when the unrepealable doom will be pronounced against every thing accursed of God; and when the final sentence of ruin passed upon Jericho will be only a type of that which the contumacious and the rebellious must undergo. Did a single inhabitant of that devoted city, the family of Rahab excepted, escape to encourage others in rebellion? Not one. As universal will be the punishment of those who obey not the gospel of truth. Vainly may they call on the rocks to fall upon them and the hills to cover

them. The omniscient Judge will discover them, bring them before his bar, arraign them, condemn them, and deliver them over to the ministers of his wrath, to execute it, amidst the penal woes of that state, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Escape then for your lives: and *to-day while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.*

Turn however, from the deep shades of this gloomy picture, to contemplate the safety of those on whom the hand of God has bound the mark of deliverance. Rahab had entertained the spies, because, through the grace of faith bestowed upon her, she believed the coming triumphs of Israel, the approaching ruin of Jericho, and the necessity of having her portion with the people of God. "By faith the harlot Rahab, perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies in peace."[1] This holy faith overcame even the yearnings of love towards her country, and induced her to make a covenant with Joshua for her own deliverance, when she found that her nation was given over to ruin and extermination. Her house stood upon the walls where the first and greatest danger fell: yet when they were levelled with the earth, and the victorious tribes went every man straight

[1] Hebrews xi. 31.

before him and took the city, that house stood uninjured. The scarlet thread, the appointed badge of her deliverance, was hung from her window: the men of Israel beheld it, and hastened to fulfil their engagement in her favour. She, and they with her, were plucked as brands out of the burning. Nay, at length she obtained an inheritance among the chosen tribes, became a mother in Israel, and an ancestor of the Saviour of the world. This instance may surely exhibit and magnify the power of faith and the goodness of God to deliver in the day of trouble, and in the searching inquisition of judgment. Among the countless thousands whom the deluge surprised, one family alone served God. His hand shut that family into the ark, and they lived amidst the devastating flood, while all beside perished in the waters. Lot and his house were the only righteous in Sodom, and they were delivered. The Israelites in Goshen had marked their doors with the blood of the paschal Lamb; and while the angel of God went through Egypt on his errand of death, they alone were uninjured, because he acknowledged the covenanted sign of their safety. Faith alone can strengthen you to do the will of God. Faith alone can arm you to deny the affections most dear to an unrenewed and sinful heart; and to follow the call and claim of Jesus Christ, through

evil report and good report. Much ignorance and imperfection were mingled with the faith of Rahab; yet did it avail for her deliverance. The wrath of God will soon visit and punish the strong holds of sin. But it shall not come nigh thee, O sincere and consistent believer in the gospel of Christ. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. My brethren, with Rahab, or with the men of Jericho must your portion be assigned, as ye possess or disregard the sign of salvation—even faith in Christ, which worketh by love. Choose accordingly,—and remember what depends upon your decision. *These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.*

SERMON XVI.

THE SIN AND PUNISHEMENT OF ACHAN.

JOSHUA VII. 19—21.

And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." It is an essential part of charity to abstain from any line of conduct which may be detrimental to those around us. Unhappily this duty is too frequently viewed in a partial and inadequate light.

Had Achan been asked, whether he desired to bring defeat and death into the camp, and armies of Israel, he would probably have spurned at the question. Yet, while he gratified his sordid avarice with the Babylonish garment, and the shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold, he sharpened the sword of the men of Ai against his brethren, and charged his soul with the guilt of their slaughter in the battle. Even thus the consequences of individual sin fall, not only upon the offender, but, in some degree, upon the society to which he belongs.

This frequent connexion between the guilt of a transgressor, and the sufferings of those who are innocent of his offence, may be ordered by the Most High, among other beneficent ends, to make us more vigilant over ourselves, and each other; that we may neither wound the members of that spiritual body with which we are united, nor bring dishonour upon its glorified head. Such a holy caution is evidently taught in the history before us, which comprises,

I. The Sin of Achan.

II. His Punishment.

I. The word of the Lord had doomed Jericho to absolute ruin. Its inhabitants were to be slain; its silver and gold, its vessels of brass,

and iron, were to be consecrated to the Lord, and laid up in his treasury, as witnesses of the awful manner in which he had vindicated the glory of his name, and the terrors of his justice. Every man of Israel was warned to keep himself from the accursed thing, lest he should make himself accursed by the taking of it, and make the camp of Israel also a curse, and trouble it. In defiance, however, of this precept, so plainly, so solemnly enforced, did Achan, as he went through the city, to execute the decree of God, permit himself to be tempted by a splendid robe, embroidered in the looms of Babylon, by some shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, to transgress the commandment of the Lord, and to commit a sacrilege against the Most High.

The conduct of every offender against the divine law resembles that of Achan. He is surrounded by incitements to sin: but each transgression is marked with the impress of a divine prohibition, and branded as an accursed thing, too plainly to be mistaken; and infallibly communicates of that curse to those who wilfully touch it. When the temptation is most strong or seductive, a hand-writing like that upon the wall of Belshazzar's palace appears, to deter the endangered soul, and testifies, *Because of these things cometh the wrath of God*

upon the children of disobedience; be not ye, therefore, partakers with them. But the God of this world blinds the eyes of those who believe not the declarations of the God of truth, and leads them thus to ruin.

There are some circumstances in the confession of Achan, marking the progress of sin, from its first entrance into the heart, to its outward commission, which may serve as the history of almost every offence committed against the law of God, the soul of the transgressor, and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Bear with me while I lay them before you; that, under the teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit, ye may at once discover the danger by which ye are beset, and the means of escape from it.

(1.) *An undue familiarity with things forbidden was the first cause of Achan's downfall.* "I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight." That man must walk through life without eyes, or passions, without the exercise of reason, or the kindlings of affection, who, amidst the numberless evils of this perverted world, never looks upon, nor is solicited by an occasion of sin. Every one must rather pass, like the Israelites among the spoils of Jericho, through objects strongly inciting him to offend against

the decree of God, and take possession of some gratification, which will bring the wrath and curse of the Lord upon him. Temptations to sin will look bright and captivating, as the garment, and the silver and the gold glittered before the eye of Achan. And that same deceitfulness of sin, which opens the eye wide to gaze upon the exterior attraction of an accursed thing, by some mysterious mechanism, closes the ear to the rebukes of conscience, or to the denunciations of God. The eye is the great inlet to that mischief which works upon the heart. There is no safety, except in imitating Job, by making a covenant with our eyes, that we should not admit evil desires through them, to pollute and defile us. The senses must be kept under due restraint: and the prayer of David should often rise to our lips; *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in thy way.* Set the Lord, O Christian, always before thee, if thou wouldest walk safely. Then, "let thine eyes look right onward, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Turn neither to the right hand, nor to the left, lest the lust of the eyes ensnare thee.

(2.) Inattention to this important caution, occasioned a mournful progress in the guilt of Achan. *Undue admiration was productive of sinful desire.* "When I saw among the spoils

a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, of fifty shekels weight, *then I coveted them.*" The moral law of God forbids the commission of all evil, whether against him, or our neighbour. The spiritual explanation of the Saviour has also shown, that the commandments may be broken, without the actual transgression—that murder may be the enmity of the spirit, and adultery the impurity of the heart. But even the literal precept discovers the mind of God in this respect: and while the first nine commandments forbid, with his voice, any unholy practice—the tenth, which cries, "Thou shalt not covet," lays the axe to the root of all improper desire; enjoining us, in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content, without anxious wishes for any thing which our heavenly Father has seen good to deny.

No part of the divine law, separate from its blessed office of being a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, discovers a greater manifestation of divine love, than the tenth commandment, whether it respects our own peace, the welfare of our neighbour, the common good, or the glory of God. If sinful desires be entertained, they must pollute and distress the mind, even though the course of providence, or the operations of restraining grace, should hinder the

perpetration of the contemplated sin. The great majority of men, however, practise upon themselves a gross and fatal delusion, by thinking nothing evil which is confined within the recesses of the heart. If the sovereignty of God were confined by those limits which bound human authority, and could take cognizance of external disobedience only, such a view might be correct. But, *as the Lord seeth not as man seeth, —as he looketh upon the heart,* such an opinion merely leads those who entertain it, to sport themselves with their own deceivings. That professor of the gospel of Christ who would adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour, in all things, and avoid the peril of making shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience, must pray "that all carnal affections may die in him, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live, and grow in him." *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer!* It must not suffice him, that the stream of evil gushes not forth to the light: its fountain must be dried up in the heart. Thence proceed evil thoughts, the leaders of all that terrible army of mischief, sin, and sorrow, which our Lord Jesus Christ has so forcibly described. Here then, must be the main conflict of a Christian. Little does

that man know of spiritual warfare, of his own deceitful heart, of the divine requirement, or of his causes of danger, who does not feel, that safety and hope depend, under the salvation of the cross, upon the courage and constancy with which the battle is fought against the bosom sins that do most easily beset him. It is no easy task to take the child of our cherished, though sinful desire, as Abraham took his son, and to offer it upon the altar of a divine command. That unholy affection will not lie patiently upon the wood, and beneath the knife; nor resign itself to death, as a lamb that is brought to the slaughter, which is dumb. It will resist, remonstrate, plead. If it should see the tempted spirit in earnest for its extermination, it will only desire, as it were, a respite from present execution; and such a delay, as Jephtha's daughter required of her father: "Let me alone awhile, and then do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth."[1] Beware, however, that ye listen not to the seduction. If any unhallowed desire have arisen within you, go in prayer to God, through the mediation of Jesus, for the Almighty help of his Spirit, to enable you to subdue it: and, in the sufficiency of that grace,

[1] Gurnall's Christian Armour, I. 6.

rest not day nor night, until it be brought into subjection to the will of your God and Saviour. Carnal nature may plead for its indulgence, as Lot for Zoar, "Is it not a little one?" But that wisdom which the Holy Ghost teacheth, will show you, that as the least neglected spark may enkindle a conflagration, to lay waste a city, so may an unobserved lust burst at length into a flame, which may consume the present and eternal peace of the offender. All our desires, if we wish them not to lead us into sin, must be kept in entire obedience to the revealed will and law of God. If they usurp a dominion over us, they instantly become our remorseless tyrants. While Hagar was a servant, no act of undutifulness is charged upon her: but when she is given unto Abraham's bosom, she taunts the patriarch's wife, disturbs his house, and gains an influence over him, so strong, that, until enjoined by the Most High himself, he cannot consent to part with her. One security alone remains: *Keep thy heart with all diligence.* Imitate Nehemiah, therefore, when he, and the captains of Judah were endeavouring to rebuild Jerusalem, while their enemies conspired to hinder them. "We made our prayer unto God, and set a watch against them day and night." A Christian should pass through the temptations around him, as Israel wished

to pass through the highway of Edom, turning not aside, but hastening towards the promised land, with his eye and heart so fully occupied by the glory and joy set before him, as to have no desire for perishing vanities. Such a heavenly mindedness is the best remedy for the love of sinful things. He only who has thus learned to walk by faith, and to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Saviour," will be able to escape the pollutions that are in the world through lust. He only who can hope, that by the grace of adoption, his body has become the temple of the Holy Ghost, a habitation of God, through the Spirit, will be anxious to preserve himself from all defilement. Only such a man is happy in his life, and in his hope: *Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.*

(3.) It rarely happens, that evil rests with the indulgence of desire. Satan is too malignant an enemy to leave the transgressor, until the evil be consummated. *Lust when it is conceived bringeth forth sin.* Such was the experience of Achan. *Unholy desire led him into flagrant transgression.* "I saw these things, I coveted them, and took them." When the great enemy of man has led captive the soul in the bonds of any evil concupiscence, his greatest work is done. Some promise of secresy, some assu-

rance of delight, some favourable opportunity, some removal of restraints, or some more sudden and violent temptation, will be cast before the endangered bond-servant: and he will be contented, nay think himself in the way of peace and happiness, to do the bidding of his dreadful master, and earn the wages of sin, eternal death. As Christ formed in a believer's heart is the principle of life, and the hope of glory, so evil desires formed in the mind of an ungodly man, will, in all probability, be matured into actual wickedness, and become practical presumptuous sin. Behold their consequences in Achan's trespass, and in the circumstances which led to its commission; and be warned against them. Avoid the persons, the places, the amusements, the books, which would lead you into temptation. If seduction should assail you, endeavour to realize the presence of the Lord, the terrors of his wrath, and the mercies of his love. So that when the tempter aims his fiercest and most fiery dart, you may each say, *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!*

The history of iniquity, like the roll in Ezekiel's vision, is written within, and without, with lamentation, and mourning, and woe. Lust, as we have seen, when it is conceived, bringeth forth sin: but the sad process stops not here. *Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.*

Following therefore the course of this dark though instructive history, we reach

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF ACHAN'S GUILT. When Ahab met Elijah, he cried, in the consciousness of his own offences, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" "I have not troubled Israel," answered the indignant prophet, "but thou and thy father's house; in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord." Similar to this reproof was the mournful address of Joshua to Achan, when sentence was about to pass upon him. "Why hast thou troubled us—the Lord shall trouble thee this day." He was not merely his own enemy, but the enemy of the tribes among whom he dwelt. His offence had a double aspect of wrath—*upon others;* and *upon himself.*

(1.) *It brought shame, defeat, and death, into the camp of Israel,* His iniquity was visited upon them. "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them, for they have taken of the accursed thing: therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed." The divine presence and power manifested among them, and displayed in their behalf, could alone cover their heads, and give them victory in the day of battle. That presence was withdrawn, that omnipotence ceased

to protect and prosper them, while the sin of Achan remained undiscovered and unpunished. "I will not be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from among you." The men of Israel and Joshua evidently considered their disgrace and defeat before Ai, as a mark of the divine displeasure. "The Lord's arm was not shortened, that it could not save, nor his ear heavy, that it could not hear; but their iniquities had separated between them and their God, and their sins had hid his face from them that he would not hear." Is it asked, amidst the fluctuations of public opinion, and the agitations of political conflict, "Who is the bitterest enemy of his country?" The answer is at hand,—he who is the most daring violator of the law of his God;—that man does his country more mischief, than all the armed array of human foes. His guilt sharpens their swords, and nerves their arms, and invigorates their devices. On the other hand, it turns the counsels of that land where his sin is committed, encouraged, or tolerated, like the counsels of Ahithophel, into foolishness. It brings dissension into the cabinet, and weakness, or cowardice, into the field. It makes the hearts of the people melt and become like water before their enemies. As Christians, as lovers of our brethren, whose safety or whose life our guilt may endanger, as

patriots who regard our country, and would make her the real glory of all lands, we are loudly required to repress the love, and abstain from the commission, of all evil. Otherwise, however secretly it be wrought, it will have an awful manifestation in the shame, reproach, disgrace, and danger, which it may produce to the land and the institutions which we are bound to honour and defend.

(2.) *The guilt of Achan brought sorrow upon Joshua and the princes of Israel.* "Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord, until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust on their heads." In this distress he was led to expostulate with God, in earnest sincerity, yet with a great alloy of unadvised eagerness, doubt, and even despondency. Among the collateral and indirect evils of sin, must be reckoned the shame and sorrow which it produces in the minds of those who are jealous for the glory of God, and anxious for the best interests of their brethren. Rivers of waters ran down the eyes of the man after God's own heart, because Israel kept not the law of the Lord. Paul mourned over the iniquities of the false teachers at Philippi; "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.'

Who that knows the dreadful consequences of offending God, the terrors of almighty justice, executed by almighty power—who that views with the eye of faith the woes inflicted by the worm that dieth not, and the worm that never shall be quenched, can see a mistaken fellow-creature ruining his soul, and sinning away every hope of its eternal salvation, without being moved to sorrow, and agitated by a regret, too frequently as vain, as it is poignant. And shall not this very grief of others like-minded with the compassionate Saviour, be reckoned by a just and holy God as aggravations of the transgressors' guilt? My brethren, if Christian friends have expostulated with any of you upon the evil of your way,—if tears have flowed from the eye, and anguish has filled the heart of a parent, a brother, a sister, or a friend, in consequence of the dishonour which you have done to the mercy of God, the blood of Christ, the pleading of the Holy Ghost,—if they have remonstrated with you, besought you to have pity upon yourselves, laid your awful case before God in prayer, and still found you obdurate, will not this, suppose ye, be required of you in the day of final retribution? Will it not add to the guilt of the devoted city in judgment, that Jesus wept over it, and would have saved it? And shall you be guiltless of this additional item in the awful

reckoning for sin? Alas, no! Bear the conviction deeply in your minds: and while there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth—while the Eternal Father waits your recovery, to bid heaven and earth rejoice over it, and to cry, "This my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found;"—while the Lamb of God desires to see in you of the travail of his soul, and to be satisfied—and while the hearts of Christian friends yearn over you, to bring you to salvation, listen to the united voice, obey the holy impulse, and be saved.

(3.) Against considerations of this kind, however, Achan might have been steeled and fortified: but there were consequences *to himself*, which would repay his transgression, and make its folly and bitterness come home to his mind, with terrible regret. For a time the garment, and the shekels, and the wedge, lay in his tent: and though he could not wear the one, nor spend the others, he might pride himself upon possessing them, in the miserable delusion of a covetous spirit. But the Israelites were summoned before the Lord, and the hour of recompence was at hand. The lots were given forth. At first he might stand enwrapped in security, and little fearful, that among the mighty multitude assembled round him, he

alone should be detected: but this unholy confidence could not abide. The tribe of Judah, to which he belonged, is taken; and the probabilities of discovery are vastly increased. Some rising fear begins to struggle with his unholy confidence: and now his heart throbs with a quicker and louder alarm; for the family of the Zarhites, of which he was a member, is selected from the rest, as containing the guilty man. That family comes near by its households; and lo the household of Zabdi is taken. Whither now shall Achan flee, and where is the hope of secresy with which he lulled his soul to sleep, in its guilt and crime? The family of Zabdi advances, the last lots are given forth; and behold, Achan the son of Carmi is found, and stands among the countless thousands of Israel, pointed out by the unerring finger of God, as the man who had taken of the accursed thing, and made himself a curse by this presumptuous act of sacrilege. The talents, and the raiment were beautiful in the eyes of Gehazi, when he bestowed them in the house: but how dim and worthless would they appear, when the prophet's voice thundered in his ear, and he went forth from the presence of the man of God, a leper white as snow. Ananias and Sapphira came boldly before the Apostles, doubtless taking credit to themselves for the craft with which

they had cheaply earned a good report of being merciful to the poor: but when they fell dead at the apostle's feet, the value of their money must have perished with them. Of all the delusions which the God of this world can spread before the heart, that practical infidelity which whispers the hope of impunity for sin is the most common and the most dreadful. Be sure, however, that your sin will find you out—probably before men; assuredly in that day, when the thousands of Israel who surrounded Achan will be as a drop of water, to the ocean, compared with the unimaginable multitude of the assembled world. Every secret sin will then shine as clearly before the eye of God, as the sun appears in the unclouded heaven. *There is no darkness, neither shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.* Wrath will descend upon them. As Achan, his family, and all that he had, were stoned and burned in the fire, so must obdurate transgressors perish in the fierceness of that flame which the breath of an offended God will enkindle in judgment. Where *then* was Achan's joy in the accursed thing? Where also shall be the pleasure which the wicked and those who forget God took in the toys and trifles for which they have been contented to barter their eternal peace? *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and*

lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? O, what will be the deep, the unavailing anguish of the convicted offender, when the last lot falls upon him, and when, in answer to his cry, "Hast thou found me O mine enemy?" the judge shall exclaim, and with it give his eternal sentence, "I have found thee!" My brethren, let the fate of Achan warn you to flee temptation, as Absalom's brethren fled from the feast, when they saw their brother Amnon murdered at the table for his offence. If you have already ventured upon the dark and downward way of wilful transgression, let the example of this lost Israelite meet you in the sad career; even as they who pursued Abner stood still, when they saw the bloody body of Asahel in the path before them. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

I. *The experience of the Israelites on this occasion should teach us, never to undervalue the strength of a sinful temptation.* The spies whom Joshua sent to view Ai thought meanly of its defences, and said "Let not all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai, and make not all the people to labour thither, for they are but few." In this

presuming confidence, and willing to spare themselves the toil of warfare, they attacked this despised city, and were repulsed with loss. Your temptations may appear small, your means of resistance and victory within yourselves, amply sufficient: but the least temptation is invincible by your unassisted strength. The feeblest arrow in the quiver of Satan, if you are provided with no other armour than your own sufficiency, is deadly enough to destroy you eternally. Peter was never more in danger, than when he imagined it impossible he should deny his Master; nor Sampson, with all his strength, than when he confidently slept in the lap of Dalilah. Let "him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Remember, that you wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with the principalities and powers of sin. *Take unto you therefore, the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.* Self-sufficiency is the bane of man. Be persuaded of your own inability. Be persuaded of Satan's power. Look to the all-sufficient Spirit of God for help: and imitate him who said, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

II. *The conduct of* ACHAN *should impress upon us all the necessity of a prompt and ample confession of our offences against the law of*

God. No sooner was he urged on this point by Joshua, than he made a most ingenuous disclosure of his guilt.—"I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done." *Whoso covereth his sin shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh it shall have mercy. If any say I have sinned, and perverted that which is right, and it profited me not, God will deliver his soul from going down to the pit, and his life shall see the light.* Thus cast yourselves upon the mercy of the Father, at the cross of his Son. Thus give glory to God, that he has convinced you of sin—that he has not yet recompensed your rebellion in the woes of hopeless and eternal judgment—that he has provided an atoning Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin—a sanctifying Spirit, who can make you new creatures in Christ Jesus. Be less anxious to escape from human judgment, than to be acquitted, through Christ, in the judgment of eternity. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

III. Lastly, *the example of* JOSHUA *warns us, that prayer for the mercy of God must be joined with an earnest zeal for holiness.* The leader of Israel lay before the ark, engaged in fervent

supplication: but the divine command reached him, "Get thee up; why liest thou upon thy face? Israel hath sinned.—Up, sanctify the people—ye cannot stand before your enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." Individual or national fasts and supplications are the mockeries of humiliation and prayer, unless we aim to wash our hearts from wickedness. When we search the chambers of iniquity within us, by the word and Spirit of God, and desire the expulsion of every idol, we may hope for success. If we endeavour not to mortify all the iniquity, against which we implore divine help, we are assisting Satan to close our eyes, and tempting God to harden our hearts. *Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.* Live in the spirit of prayer; and improve the graces which you entreat the God of mercy, through his Son to bestow upon you. Depend upon God; but see that ye receive not his grace in vain. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is he that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* Cast out the accursed thing. So shall your prayer be heard, your warfare assisted, your victory secured, your triumph made eternally glorious.

SERMON XVII.

THE STRATAGEM AND SUCCESS OF THE GIBEONITES.

JOSHUA IX. 3—6.

And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up; And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. And they went to Joshua, unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

THE varieties of the human mind are almost as great, as those of the human countenance. This proverbial truth receives confirmation from the contrary effects produced by the same event upon different individuals. The miraculous success of Joshua in the seige of Jericho, and

the capture of Ai, induced the nations of Canaan to gather themselves together to fight with him and with Israel, with one accord. The people of Gibeon were otherwise impressed. They saw the terrors of the God of Israel in these wondrous victories, and owned the necessity of submission to enemies, with whom it appeared vain to contend.

The same difference is observable in the momentous concerns of religion. When St. Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection to the philosophers and multitudes of Athens, "some mocked, others said, we will hear thee again of this matter:" while certain men, on the other hand, clave unto him and believed. We are commanded to go forth, and speak all the words of this life, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. We declare the miraculous victories of the gospel, from the day of Pentecost to the present hour. We proclaim the denunciations of wrath, and the invitations of mercy. How are they received? Some are saved by them, and some perish. *To the one we are a savour of life unto life; to the other a savour of death unto death.* But however various the dispositions with which the gospel is now heard, "wisdom will be justified of her children." The prudence, or the folly of those to whom the tidings of salvation are preached, will

be manifested in the day of judgment and recompence. The manner in which the Gibeonites were impressed with the victories of Israel, and the measures induced by these convictions, though mixed with much of debasing alloy, exhibit an instructive lesson of the manner in which men should be persuaded, by the terrors of the Lord, to "flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life." In order that we may avoid the evil, and choose the good, it will be necessary to consider,

I. THE STRATAGEM OF THE GIBEONITES.

II. THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT SUCCEEDED.

I. They were situated in the midst of those guilty nations, whose gross idolatry and daring iniquities had awakened the wrath of God against them, and provoked him to pass upon them a sentence of utter extermination. The armies of Israel were already within the land, as appointed ministers of his threatened vengeance. It had been partly executed: and the ruins of Jericho and Ai were its first dreadful trophies. While the deceitfulness of sin hardened the hearts of their neighbours, the Gibeonites determined upon making an immediate peace with Israel.

(1.) *In this resolve there was much to deserve praise and imitation.* Had they remained at home until the storm of war burst over their

heads, it would have overwhelmed them with an irresistible ruin. Gathering force as it swept along its destined path, and embracing every moment a wider extent of desolation, the possibility of escaping from it, would have been continually diminished. If the Gibeonites attempted to retreat before it, other nations would probably have resisted their flight, and driven them back again, or exterminated them, as dangerous invaders. They had indeed been told, that God had commanded his servant Moses to give the men of Israel all the land, and to destroy its inhabitants before them: but the sternest enemy might be disarmed by submission. It was at least their only resource; and they fled to it in trembling hope. All the men of Gibeon are reported to have been mighty: but what was human strength that it should contend with the manifest interference of an omnipotent God? They felt its weakness, and wisely declined the unequal contest.

There is a proclamatiom gone forth against all who are enemies to God in their minds by wicked works; against all, who, instead of fleeing to the refuge of a Saviour's mercy, remain in their state of natural condemnation, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and

without God in the world." We are commanded to make this proclamation to you in affectionate fidelity. Do not desire us to repress it, to "prophesy smooth things, to prophesy deceits." Rather encourage us, to make a true representation of your danger, and of the means of your deliverance. If any of you still remain under the imputation of unpardoned transgression, without justification from sin, through faith in the great atonement, and therefore without peace between you and God, do not deceive yourselves by groundless hopes of safety, because the great mass of mankind is on your side. If these things be not cunningly devised fables, but the true sayings of God; if his divine truth be pledged to fulfil every declaration of his word, and if his power to fulfil it be resistless, your only hope of safety lies in immediate submission. *Woe to him that striveth with his Maker!* Do not wait in listlessness and apathy, or in the pride of disdain, until the denunciation be accomplished. Do not thus, in effect say, *Let him make speed and hasten his work that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it.* When the Saviour would visit you in the first work of his convincing mercy, say not, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of

God; art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"[1] There is no wisdom in staying till a judgment comes home to us: the only method of avoiding it, is to meet it half way. There is the same remedy of war, and of spiritual danger. To prevent an enemy in his own borders is the best stay of invasion; and to solicit God betimes, in a manifest peril, is the best antidote for death. Surely it had been counted folly to the Jews, if when Ahasuerus had sealed the warrant for their extermination, they had adorned their houses, planted their fields, and prepared their hearts for mirth, without making any effort to obtain a reversal of the decree. More palpable, more ruinous is the delusion of that man who remains in security, thinking only of safety and pleasure, while God hath a controversy with him for his soul. *Agree, then, with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison, not to come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.* Reflect, that while the decree of excision is passed against all who remain in hostility to the great salvation of God, that salvation is freely offered to those who flee for refuge to

[1] Bishop Hall's Works, I. 172.

the hope set before them. There is no peradventure, no balance of probabilities to check the steps, or chill the hopes of a believing penitent. *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* Noah did not put forth his hand with such eager delight to receive the dove, when she came again to the ark, after vainly seeking rest for the sole of her foot, as that with which the compassionate Saviour will receive you, and give you rest, when you come to him weary and heavy laden. The tender father did not with more pity hasten to meet and embrace his returning son, than will the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, receive you to his love, reverse the sentence which his justice had passed upon you, and admit you, through the Spirit of adoption, to the privileges of his children. While he therefore, is thus solicitous for your salvation, will you remain indifferent? While the gracious Spirit of life and mercy is pleading with you for your soul, will you so love present ease and pleasure—will you be so much influenced and deceived by that "evil heart of unbelief which departs from the living God," as to say, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will send for thee?" The rich mercies of the gospel are descending upon others, in love and pardon, peace and hope. Shall your souls then, remain like the fleece of Gi-

deon, dry and unrefreshed, while all around is soft and moist with the dew of heaven.

The Gibeonites having resolved to make submission, clogged their purpose with no reservations. They surrendered themselves unconditionally to the mercy of Joshua, and the princes of Israel. Preservation from death was their object; that gained, they left the terms with their conquerors. "We are thy servants; therefore now make a league with us. Behold, we are in thy hand; as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do." Liberty, property, love of national distinction, and military renown, were all merged in the paramount desire of deliverance from the edge of the sword. They did not, indeed, directly appeal to the avarice of Israel, as the Shechemites and Samaritans, in after days, appealed to that of Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah. "Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey:"[1] but they made an unlimited offering of themselves, and of their possessions, to be dealt with, as Joshua might choose. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." How worthless, then, should every sacrifice appear, compared with the life of his soul! One thing is needful; that

[1] Jeremiah xli. 8.

secured, the rest is but of little worth. If the salvation of the gospel reach us, it can be only upon the terms of an unreserved submission. We must accept mercy, not upon the conditions which the pride, the ignorance, the self-righteousness, the love of sin, to which we are all so prone, would induce us to propose, but as a free gift on the part of God, through the atoning merit of his Son. *What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

(2.) Thus far the example of the Gibeonites may safely be imitated. They believed that vengeance was rapidly approaching their borders; and, moved with fear, adopted the only method of deliverance. Their conduct, however, exhibits *much to be avoided.* "They did work wilily." They, who were sent to secure, if possible, a league with Israel, assumed the character of ambassadors from a distant country: and their whole equipage and provision were very ingeniously adapted to promote the

deception. They had reason to believe, that if they were recognized, as part of the guilty nations of Canaan, their suit for mercy would be rejected, and their destruction would be inevitable. If the way in which their submission was made, had corresponded with the principle which produced it, they would have exhibited a striking and instructive example of the manner in which a trembling penitent should approach the awful majesty of heaven. But they used stratagem, when they should have fled, in simplicity, to implore the clemency of Joshua, and, through him, of the God of Israel. They intermingled truth and falsehood in their report. Such infirmity, indeed, might be expected from men ignorant of the divine requirement, and of that God, who hates concealment, evasion, and insincerity. From those however, to whom, as to ourselves, the glad tidings of salvation have been declared, and all the conditions of redemption made plain, God will admit no approach, except in the integrity of open confession. The Gibeonites might be excused for entertaining doubts of deliverance, and therefore for relying, in part, upon the inventions of human wisdom, for their safety. But as the gospel of reconciliation, by Jesus Christ, admits no room for doubt, to any one who desires to embrace its refuge of mercy, so neither will it per-

mit any subterfuge or extenuation in him who would obtain remission of sins, and eternal life. *Whosoever will, may take of the water of life freely;* but he must mingle no device of his own, with the simplicity of redemption, through the death of Christ. He must abandon every other experiment, to obtain justification from his iniquities; and listen, in implicit obedience to that voice which cries from the cross, and from the throne of the Redeemer, *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside me there is no Saviour.* If, indeed, we came into the presence of the Most High, as Esther into that of Ahasuerus, when no previous invitation had been given, no smile of welcome seen upon the face of the king, and no golden sceptre of mercy stretched forth, that our hand might touch it, infidelity would possess some excuse for associating its own plans of salvation, with those revealed in the gospel of the love of Christ. If we were compelled to draw nigh Him with the queen's trembling hope, of which hardly a pulse might be felt to beat, and to say, "If I perish, I perish," we might look around, and wish within ourselves for another refuge, in which to take shelter. But when "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come;" and a voice descends, as from Calvary, and cries, *Be-*

hold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, any attempt to compromise the goodness and grace of God, would serve only to dishonour both, and tempt him to withdraw them. *The Lord's delight is in them that fear him, and in them that put their trust in his mercy.* Characters like these may have early prejudices against the plan of the gospel, and of its salvation by grace, through faith. Yet if they are willing to say to God, from the heart, with the men of Gibeon, "Behold, we are in thine hand, as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do," he will condescend to their infirmities, as to the ignorance of Nathanael, who earnestly longed to see the Messiah, yet doubted whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth. He will reveal to them the fulness of that mercy, after which their hearts aspire, and say of each of them, as he receives him to his love, and invests him with the rich inheritance of salvation, *Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!* Bear this truth upon your minds, and ye cannot fail of success. *Other foundation can no man lay, save that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

II. It is related to the honour of Augustus Cæsar, that when he had proclaimed a great reward to any one who should bring to him the head of a notorious pirate, the offender himself

appeared, and was not only pardoned, but rewarded for his confidence in the Emperor's clemency. His conduct faintly resembled that which Joshua, on the part of God, exhibited towards the men of Gibeon; and had their surrender been as unreserved, as the submission of the Roman culprit, the result would doubtless have been as satisfactory. Their duplicity, however, demands us next to consider, THE SUCCESS OF THEIR STRATAGEM.

(1.) Their appearance was not sufficiently scrutinized, their story not well examined, their plea too lightly admitted. *Their request therefore, was granted, and Joshua gave them assurance of life.* Some writers have imagined, that it was permitted the Israelites to make peace with the nations of Canaan, upon condition of their entire subjection. Others have asserted, that the sentence of destruction against them was final and unrepealable.[1] One thing is plain, that conditional mercy might be shown to these people; otherwise, Rahab, her kindred, and family, could not have been lawfully preserved. The threatened destruction was therefore to be put into act, upon all who would not serve Israel, forsake their idolatries, and worship God.

[1] Exod. xxiii. 21—23. xxxiv. 12. Deut. vii. 2. compared with Deut. xx. 11.

In the same manner the message of wrath was sent forth by the mouth of Jonah, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." But although the precise time of its ruin was thus declared, its King, its nobles, and its people, repented of their iniquities, and their offended "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not."[1] However they might have been deceived, Joshua and the men of Israel had sworn to save the lives of these prostrate Gibeonites; and like the acceptable servant of the Lord described by David, resolved to keep their oath, though it might be to their own hurt and hindrance. Had that oath pledged them to any unlawful act, they could have kept it only with the peril of their souls, as Herod charged himself with the blood of the Baptist, because of his guilty pledge to Herodias—or as those Jews made themselves guilty of the blood of Paul, because they bound themselves under a curse that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed him. The gift of life was plainly conformable to the will and purposes of the God of mercy, because he did not revoke it. Nay, when Saul, under a pretence of zeal, slew the Gibeonites four

[1] Jonah iii. 10.

hundred and thirty years after this period, their death was solemnly avenged upon his seven sons, so as to make his house almost childless in Israel. Even when the congregation murmured against the princes and Joshua for their clemency in sparing these enemies, after their fraud had been discovered, they still adhered to their purpose, lest God should be dishonoured by the perfidious breach of a promise. "We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them." A sincerity so unblemished, and a simplicity so holy, well become the Christian soldier, and the man of God. He may be deceived, his kindness may be abused, his love appealed to under false pretences: but let him not therefore repent, that he hath acted according to the will of God, and the rule of charity. It is not for him to see the heart. When he has used all needful and lawful means of discovery, let him not fear to open his hand wide to his brother, to the poor and the needy in the land. If it be a maxim in English law, that many guilty should escape, rather than that one innocent man should suffer, it is equally a maxim in the law of Christian love, that benevolence should be often wronged by the undeserving, rather than that one real object of pity, one truly suffering member of Jesus Christ should be deprived of

that relief which, in the name of our common head he claims from Christian compassion.

Hath this part of the history then, it may be asked, no voice to those, who under much ignorance, much infirmity, and much sin, in the manner of their approach to the Father of mercies, are still trembling at their danger, and would gladly escape it? It hath indeed. Their forfeited souls shall be spared; their trespasses pardoned; and the sentence of eternal death reversed, through the merit and intercession of him who died for them, the "just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God." *When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.*

(2.) "Lying lips are but for a moment." Three days only had elapsed before the deception of the Gibeonites was discovered. They were not indeed punished with that death which they so fully merited, but they were destined *to lose all their civil and national distinctions, and to become servants of the congregation, as hewers of wood and drawers of water for the tabernacle of God.* If these men of Gibeon had come to Joshua in simplicity, their pardon would have been accompanied with other mercies, from which they were afterwards excluded. Thus also shall

it happen to him who approaches the author of eternal salvation, in the spirit of truth, laying his heart open before the Lord, confessing all his misdeeds, alive to his danger, and hoping mercy, not through any extenuation of his guilt, but with that contrite heart which God will not despise. That offender against the divine law, who in his plea for mercy underrates his sin, or makes any reservation of his state, puts aside the ample completion of the promise, *Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* "Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double minded." Thus "draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Thus plead individually with him, "Lord pardon my sin for it is great:" and then hope, that he will "do for you exceeding abundantly, above all that you can ask or think." You are not straitened in him, but in yourselves. The more fully you comprehend, lament, and would avoid your danger, the more certainly will you bespeak the compassions of his Son—the more fully experience the riches of his love. He will be glorified by your confession. That denied, his mercies will be withheld,—that imperfectly made, they will be imperfectly bestowed,—that fully uttered, they will be largely and abund-

antly imparted. *I said I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and so thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*

Eventually, however, this partial servitude was probably overruled for a blessing. These Gibeonites, we may reasonably conclude, were distributed among the cities of the Levites, and served with them in the regular courses of the sanctuary. They are generally supposed to have been the progenitors of those Nethinim, or dedicated men, who were devoted to the service of Jehovah, in the worship of his temple. If it were thus,—if they were not only saved from death, but made ministers of divine worship,—and especially, if they were called to a saving knowledge of the God of Israel, before whom they served, their condition would be ultimately most enviable and blessed. He who of all men under the ancient law most deeply felt, and loved the privileges of approaching the ark and mercy-seat of the temple, exclaimed of such a state, "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." If, coming as humble supplicants to our injured God, through him who is the way, and the truth, and the life, we are employed in his service, and permitted, even in the lowliest station of his church, to glorify him in our bodies and in our spirits which are his, we shall have

little left to want, or wish for, on this side heaven. The prodigal would surely have had his desire, if he had been taken at his word, when he cried, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me, I pray thee, as one of thy hired servants." Thus shall we also be satisfied, if the blessings of pardon, and the distinctions of that service which is perfect freedom are commended to our hearts. If then, there be among you one convinced transgressor,—one in whose mind a dread of danger and a desire for mercy have arisen, though hitherto only like a single star amidst the darkness of a winter's night, let him take consolation and hope from the history of the Gibeonites. Avoiding their deceptions, let him press forward, in simple faith and open confession, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant: and that mediator, instead of dealing out mercies toward him with a stinted hand, will give to that man a place and a name in his house, and a heritage better than of sons and daughters.

The connecting points of the history, as I have reviewed it, *exhibit the evil and danger of hasty decision.* Joshua, and the men of Israel, seem at first to have been influenced by a salutary caution and a suspicion of these strangers. "They said, Peradventure ye dwell among us, and how shall we make a league with you?" But

when the falsehood was repeated, they were thrown off their guard. "The men took of their victuals"—or as the margin probably better reads it, "they received the men because of their victuals;" and thus were deceived into a league and treaty with them. My brethren, sinful seductions always come to us like the Gibeonites to the tents of Israel. Our evil temptations would make us believe their origin to be derived far from the accursed thing, as the men of Gibeon persuaded Joshua and the princes, that they had arrived from a country in no degree connected with the devoted land of Canaan. When unholy seductions find entrance into your minds, do not hastily trust the false and flattering report with which they will endeavour to deceive you. *Beloved, believe not every spirit: but try the spirits whether they be of God.* "Satan himself may be transformed into an angel of light;" and thus attempt to delude you, as these Hivites the camp of Israel, by declaring that they were come because of the name of the Lord God of Israel. The exterior may be specious, but it is, on that very account, more to be distrusted. *Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.* As the Gileadites proved the men of Ephraim at the passages of Jordan, by the test of the Shibboleth, so try the thoughts by which you may be visited, the con-

duct to which you may be incited, and the doctrines of religion, which a judgment enlightened by the Spirit and word of God may teach you. *To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

Have you then no other resource? Let the fault and neglect of the leaders of Israel instruct you. They were deceived, because they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. The Urim and Thummim and the High Priest were in the camp, and from them an infallible answer might have been obtained. Go ye then, in the hour of temptation, to God by prayer. Implore his counsel and direction; and the Holy Spirit, in answer to your fervent petition, shall give you a right judgment in all things. Cry, each of you to God, "What I know not, that teach thou me." *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* Study the Bible; be instant in prayer: so shall the eyes of your understanding be opened to discern the causes of danger; and so shall you be enabled to live with that holy caution, which, through divine grace, will make a way for you to escape. *Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*

SERMON XVIII.

THE VICTORY OBTAINED BY JOSHUA OVER THE CONFEDERATED KINGS OF CANAAN.

JOSHUA X. 6, 7.

The men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp at Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the Kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour.

TRIAL is the test of principle. The general confides in the valour and discipline of his troops, when both have been displayed in the shock of battle. Joshua relied on the fidelity of the men of Gibeon, when they had resisted the efforts of surrounding nations, to break the treaty between them and Israel, or to avenge their desertion of the common cause. In like manner, the Christian's character must be attested, not by the vivacity of his feelings, nor

the confidence of his profession, but by the approved strength and sincerity of his obedience. It is not enough for him to say, "Though all men should deny thee, yet will I never deny thee:" but, that, having passed through the furnace, in which the trial of his faith has been found more precious than of gold that perisheth, he should be able to cry, in the humble consciousness of manifested truth, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Always adding, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Our heavenly Father regards those who exhibit such an attachment, with tenderness and delight. He stretches forth the right hand of his majesty, to be their defence against all their enemies. He magnifies the riches of his power and goodness, by an interference of both, so prompt, so effectual, and so manifest, that all men who see it must say, "This hath God done: for they must perceive that it is his work."

Views of divine interference thus consolatory abound in the long records of experience—in the pages of the word of God—and not least in the history before us. The chapter in which it stands exhibits, by a plain and powerful illustration, the danger of a Christian from the enemies of religion, whose godless cause he has deserted; the gracious and ready help of the

Saviour, to whom he has fled for refuge; and the salutary consequences of his wise and holy choice. Accompany me, therefore, with the word of life in your hands, through this portion of the warfare of Israel which involves

I. THE CONFEDERACY OF THE KINGS OF CANAAN.

II. THE VICTORY OBTAINED BY JOSHUA.

I. While the men of Gibeon made common cause with the kings and people of the Amorites who dwelt among the mountains, they enjoyed that hollow treacherous semblance of peace, which might have lulled them into a careless security, until the anger of heaven came upon them, like want upon the spendthrift, or travail upon a woman with child. Happily the rolling of the thunder awakened them, the tempest being yet distant; and they were induced to flee from it, while escape was possible. From that moment, however, the nations among whom they dwelt became their implacable enemies, and conspired together for their destruction. Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, (probably the most powerful prince of the land,) sent unto his allies, earnestly desiring their co-operation for vengeance upon Gibeon. "Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon; for it hath made peace with Joshua, and with

the children of Israel." The call was promptly obeyed. "These five kings gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it."

"When a strong man armed keepeth his palace his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he cometh upon him," the strife begins, until the conqueror "taketh away the armour wherein his adversary trusted, and divideth the spoil." No sooner does an awakened and convinced spirit turn to God, as its only refuge, than Satan throws off the disguise of ally and friend, in which he had always appeared, and commences an *open*, as he had formerly carried on a *secret* war against its salvation. From the moment in which the first heavenward motion of the soul bids it inquire, '*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*' until the work of mercy shall be made perfect in its salvation, Satan will address it with his defiance, as the prophet addressed Asa; "From henceforth thou shalt have wars." And that Christian must take Satan at his word, descend at once into the lists against him, and be contented to become, and to remain, a man of strife, until he shall exchange the whole armour of God for the peaceful robes of everlasting glory—the helmet of salvation for the crown of perfect righteousness

—and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, for the palm and sceptre of a victory, to be celebrated for ever, by the songs of the blessed. There may be joy in the presence of the angels of God, at his conversion. But while that joy falls upon his ear, with a faint, almost perhaps, with a doubtful sound, and upon his heart, with a delight which he can hardly realize, the assaults and onset of his spiritual enemy will be too plain, and too formidable to be mistaken. He must take the field immediately against sin, the world, and the devil; and fight the good fight of faith, until he receives a dismission—*Go in peace.* Nay, it will frequently happen, as the first distressing incident in this spiritual war, as it happened to Gibeon, amidst the nations of Canaan, that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household." The warning voice of the Saviour's love cried to his disciples, as they were about to enter upon their stern conflict with the powers of darkness, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Contrariety of pursuit separateth between chief friends. *Two cannot walk together, unless they be agreed:* and when the newly enlisted soldier of the cross hears that call, "Come ye out from among them,

and touch not the unclean thing," he must prepare himself to experience the alienation of those who resolutely persist in their opposition to the calls and mercies of the living God. *They that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.* If the carnal mind be enmity against him, that enmity will secretly, or openly extend to all who bear his image, submit to his law, and glory in his service. Amidst the refinements of social intercourse, it may, indeed be softened down, and divested of its palpable bitterness. Yet even here is it, too frequently found, mingling the waters of Marah with the dearest, not less than with the ordinary charities of life, and filling them with gall and wormwood. Would to God, my brethren, that the evil rested here. But alas, in too many instances, they who profess to seek the mind that was in Christ Jesus, instead of imitating his blessed example, imbibe the unhallowed zeal of such as have not been with Jesus; and in the stand which they are called upon to make against the enemies of religion, "sin after the similitude of their transgression."

The ruin of the Gibeonites would have been complete and final, if their enemies had prevailed against them. Revenge for past desertion, and fear of future annoyance, from men who were in covenant with their foes, would

have induced the Amorites to pursue them to utter extermination; and their condition would have been, if possible, more dreadful, and more hopeless, than if they had remained attached to the nations of Canaan. Bear this fact in mind, ye who have lately come forth from the confederacies of sin, who have left the ranks of the enemies of God, and are arrayed beneath the all-conquering banner of your eternal Joshua, in the battle of the Lord against the mighty. If you have renounced that friendship of the world which is enmity against God, your safety lies in adhering to your allegiance, and resisting to the end. Ye have abjured all fellowship with the works, and the prince of darkness: let not sin henceforth have dominion over you. Beware that ye return not, even in heart, to the miserable bondage which ye have left behind. *If, after ye have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, ye are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end may be worse than the beginning.* Hold you fast by God. Let Satan have no advantage over you. The great physician, indeed, will save his backsliding children, who seek his face and mercy, in deep contrition, and earnest faith. But I beseech you, to avoid making the experiment; for although the wound which would be thus

given to your souls may not be mortal, a tenderness, and a soreness, and a weakness, will probably remain with the scar; and, like the shrunk sinew of Jacob, may make you halt through life.

Gibeon was a royal city, and all the men thereof were mighty: but the confederated nations of Canaan would have prevented the possibility of an effectual resistance; so that all contest would have been the frenzy of courage —brilliant, perhaps, but useless and destructive. They chose, therefore, the better part, and fled to Joshua, as their only, and their appointed refuge. "Slack not," said they, "thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us." That same faith in the power of Israel, which first induced them to disarm it by submission, now led them to implore its protection, and intreat its exercise in their behalf. They made no vain attempts to conciliate their enemies, or to temporize with inveterate malignity. They fled at once to Joshua; appealed to the covenant engagement, by which he had bound himself to befriend them; and looked for an answer of help and peace.

Have you, my brethren, felt that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?* Appealing from his wrath, to the pardoning

mercy of his Son, have you trembled at the foes by whom you are pursued and beset? What protection then, will you implore; to what fortress of impregnable security will you flee? Will you rest upon your own resources, in the fearful strife that must be waged with the sins that do most easily beset you? Or, will ye flee to him "who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him," and who hath given to such petitioners the strong assurance of his truth—*They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand? The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth those that trust in him.* Imagine the gloom of that night, in which Peter trod the sea of Galilee, to meet his Lord. The treacherous waves are giving way beneath his feet; and lo, he begins to sink. Whither then does he turn? Will he essay to swim to the ship, through all the dangers of the stormy deep? Will he call to his companions on board, and sustain himself till they can come to his relief? No; these are refuges of lies, and he will perish if he trust to them. One only hope remains. He stretches forth his trembling hands to Jesus. He looks to him through the terrors of the tempest. He utters his earnest cry, amidst the howling of the winds, and the roaring of the waters, "Lord save me:" and immediately Jesus

stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Happy the men of Gibeon that in this eventful moment, this very crisis of their fate, they had an interest with Joshua and the armies of Israel! Happy every trembling supplicant at the throne of mercy, if he be interested by faith in the Almighty Joshua, who hath the armies of the living God at his command. Could a heathen say, when a bird, scared by a hawk, flew into his bosom, 'I will not surrender thee to thine enemy, as thou hast come to me for sanctuary?' Shall not then, that Saviour whose heart yearns to deliver the endangered souls of men, say of all who seek the ark of his redemption, *Those who come unto me I will in no wise cast out?* We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves. When our spiritual enemies make their fierce assault. he must undertake our defence, and his grace must be sufficient for us. He is the root by which the Christian is sustained—the spring by which he is replenished—the sun by which he is enlightened—the robe by which he is adorned—the shield by which he is defended. Enter into the covenant of mercy which God offers to your acceptance: and then, with humble boldness, may each of you use that plea of resistless cogency with your gracious Redeemer,

"I am thine, O save me!" Seek help from the throne of his Almighty dominion, when you most dread the conflict; and its issue shall be to your experience, like that of which the prophet reminded Asa; "Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because thou didst rely upon the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand." Were we enabled to seek the aid of our God and Saviour, with pure and simple faith, amidst the difficulties of the combat in which we are engaged, our eyes would be opened, like those of the young man in Dothan, to see the chariots and horses of fire from heaven, which the Lord of hosts arrays in defence of those who trust him. Infidelity is the very blindness of the heart. We know neither our danger, nor the omnipotence and willingness of the Son of God to deliver us; or our flight would be urged at once to him,—our warfare waged in his might—our triumph ascribed to him alone. *Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* O that a spirit of grace and supplication were shed abroad in every heart among us! What a blessed presage of victory would it exhibit! How truly would it give us the alliance of him who can alone compass us about with songs of deliverance! 'How fervently should we in-

treat that, which none but the Lord of the universe can bestow—a pardon secured by the death of that true victim who was slain from the foundation of the world—a pardon that shall remain in force when the heavens have been folded up as a vesture, and when unnumbered ages shall have witnessed to the heirs of promise, the faithfulness of Jehovah, and the immutability of his counsel. How diligently should we apply to the unfailing and unfathomable fountain of divine beneficence, for that principle of heavenly life, which if it be enkindled and cherished by the sun of righteousness, shall gloriously assimilate the soul to him, in whom is no darkness at all.'[1]

No sooner did Joshua hear the powerful appeal made by the Gibeonites to his compassion, than he ascended to their relief from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour. Every other purpose was suspended, and he gave himself entirely to their deliverance. He rested not from his progress when the day was closed; but marched all night, and came suddenly upon the enemy, and routed them with a fearful slaughter. If Israel itself had been in danger he could have done no more. And can ye not, my brethren, discern in this haste some dim traces of that

[1] Shepherd's Thoughts on private Devotion, p. 56.

speed of love, with which the Redeemer and the Spirit of grace press forward to deliver, not only those who have been long numbered among their followers, but those who have most recently joined the camp of God, and that too in circumstances of unbelief, ignorance, and infirmity, like the Gibeonites of old, when they sought the refuge of the camp in Gilgal? They may be in extremity, but he will certainly interfere to save them, with a manifestation of power, as undeniable, as when the prophet found the widow with her last handful of meal, and her last drop of oil in the cruise, and replenished both, that they failed not, until the Lord sent rain upon the earth. Flee ye, in every difficulty—flee ye by prayer, to the open sanctuary of God in Christ Jesus, and ye shall not be disappointed of your hope. Elisha had seen the power of God displayed towards his master. When therefore, the prophet's mantle fell, as he ascended to heaven, Elisha took it up in faith, smote with it the waters of Jordan, exclaiming, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and the river was divided for his passage. Let the same faith, gathering strength from instances of deliverance and mercy vouchsafed to others, animate and encourage you to rest upon both: and, *according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you.*

II. Such, at least, was the experience of the Gibeonites. Their urgent application to Joshua was justified BY THAT ASTONISHING VICTORY, which we have next to consider, and, by the good Spirit of God, to apply to our hearts. A cheering presage of it had been already given, when the hosts marched forth to the battle. The Lord said unto Joshua, "Fear them not, for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee." He that believeth shall have the same witness in himself—a strong, though an humble expectation of victory. His most merciful Father in Christ Jesus shall bear him testimony. His most blessed Redeemer shall come into his soul with the same gracious hope. His eternal Sanctifier shall write a similar persuasion on his heart. And their united assurance shall tranquillize the suggestions of doubt and despondency, with the conviction of faith, that "God will bruise Satan under his feet shortly."

When the battle was joined, success remained not for a moment doubtful. "The Lord discomfited the Amorites before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter." The hailstones from heaven did their part with the swords of Israel, in the work of vengeance, and slew even more of their enemies, than fell by the hand of man. Nay, the favour of God was exhibited, and the

success of his people secured, by a miracle unparalleled in previous or succeeding ages of the world, except by that power which bade the dead come forth from the corruption of the tomb, and live. The day was probably drawing to a close, and the sun even now in the horizon, before the work of slaughter and extermination had been accomplished. That work, dreadful as it was, must be finished, and Joshua must be the minister. And lo, after that silent prayer of faith, which wrestled with God, and prevailed, he said, in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies;" and the great light of heaven hasted not to go down about a whole day. At the voice of a man, the sun that rules the day, was stopped, as he descended to the west, and the moon, that governs the night, as she arose in the east. These eyes of the lower world, which were probably the gods whom the Amorites worshipped, were compelled, as it were, to stand still, and look down upon their mistaken idolaters, who might cry to them for life and deliverance. Did the Lord thus hearken to the voice of a man, when he fought for Israel? And shall not the intercession of Him who doeth as

he will among the armies of heaven, plead with resistless energy, and with almighty power, for miracles of mercy and deliverance, in behalf of those who seek the salvation of his cross, the new creation of his Spirit, and the attainment of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord? If the Most High magnified Joshua, by thus condescending to his petition, how surely shall the pleading of our risen advocate succeed, whom God delighteth to honour! How surely shall the work of his mediation be advanced by wondrous interpositions of power, and of mercy; until *every tongue shall confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!*

The five kings who led the Amorites on this eventful day, were taken alive, and, when the slaughter of their subjects had been completed, were brought forth from the cave where they had vainly sought concealment, in order to be judged and punished, according to the righteous will of heaven. Before the sentence was executed, Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, "Come near, and put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed; be strong,

and of good courage, for thus shall the Lord do unto all your enemies, against whom ye fight." Such an act was not intended by the illustrious leader of Israel, as an insult over prostrate and unresisting foes; but doubtless, in obedience to an express communication from God, and as a witness against the people themselves, that the Lord had fulfilled, and would continue to fulfil, his promises in their behalf.

A victory equally decisive in its character, and immeasurably more glorious in its results, will the strength of God enable his soldiers and servants to obtain, in the good fight of their salvation, if they receive not his grace in vain, but contend against their enemies, in the might, which it alone can afford. The evil heart of unbelief, which departs from the living God—the love of this present world—the fascinations of pleasure—the lethargy of carelessness—the temptations of sensuality—the spirit of the scoffer—the impious courage of the profane, and all the seductions that would withdraw the soul from the adorable source and centre of its hopes and mercies, shall be subdued by that effectual grace, which maketh the Christian "more than conqueror through him who loved him." He shall place his foot in succession upon the necks of those spiritual enemies, who have warred with so much fierceness against his

eternal life. Every victory which Christ, who strengtheneth him, achieves on his behalf, will be also the prelude of triumphs yet to come, before he shall follow the banner of his redemption into heaven, and repose for ever beneath its shade, within the glories of the promised land.

When this battle had been won, "all the people returned to the camp, to Joshua, in peace: and none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel." Not a single soldier among all their armies appears to have been missing, to have fallen in battle, or even to have been wounded by the sword of his enemies. Now doth not such a consummation fitly shadow forth the glorious end of that warfare, in which, as soldiers of Jesus Christ, we profess to be engaged? When the last enemy shall be destroyed, the last alarm hushed, the last victory gained, and all the ransomed church of the Most High shall come to the camp of their almighty Leader and Saviour, in the peace and rest of heaven, all the envy, the opposition, the hatred, the malice, that was armed and envenomed against the author, and the scheme of redemption, will be heard no more for ever. *The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and*

gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. They who overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and have followed him, in holy devotedness, through all the vicissitudes of earthly warfare, shall take their station of peace and glory among the hosts of the redeemed. When they shall have executed judgment upon the accuser of the brethren, the voice of rapture, that celebrates the accomplished salvation of God, shall fill the courts of heaven with harmonies of praise, which the generations of eternity shall not interrupt; and which shall be a new song in the ears, and hearts, of the just made perfect, without weariness, and for ever. Awake, then, ye who trust to have a part in this future triumph. Be strengthened by that view which Christian faith and hope obtain of the things that must be hereafter. Endure hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ: and go forth to your combat, in the strength of the Lord, as becomes men who anticipate a blessed victory. Strive as becomes Christians, "upon whose inward vision has been poured some rays of glory from the beauty of the promised land, and whose ears have been visited by some faint, yet cheering echoes of hallelujahs, uttered by saints once militant upon earth, now called to their reward in heaven." *Blessed be the Lord your strength, who teacheth your hands to war, and your fingers to fight!*

The example of Joshua and Israel on this occasion leads us to reflect, that *our own spiritual combat will be most successfully fought, while we are endeavouring to be serviceable to others in the perils of their conflict.* The chosen tribes were called to get the land into possession by a series of battles and victories; and never were their arms more prospered, than when they buckled on the harness of war to assist their endangered allies in Gibeon. Vainly will that man boast that he is a child of God, a soldier of Christ, who "seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him." If ye overtake one soldier of the common faith, wounded, or halting by the way, weary of his combat, or perhaps drawing back unto perdition, do not pass him by in cold indifference, whether he shall persevere, or perish. Let no one say, Am I my brother's keeper? but have compassion on him, even as God hath had pity upon you. "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends:" and while you are assisting others in the way of life, bringing them to the knowledge and love of their great Redeemer, and cheering their fainting spirits in the day of strife, the Lord will repay these acts of love sevenfold into your own bosoms. Often has a nation secured its own peace and glory, while, with

generous courage, and devoted zeal, it has fought the battles of its allies; and the same result will be found in the Christian conflict. Comfort, therefore, the feeble minded, and support the weak. *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.* Then shall ye not fail of reward from him who hath already said, with that voice which will never be recalled, *Inas much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

SERMON XIX.

THE PROMISED LAND DIVIDED BY LOT AMONG THE ISRAELITES.

JOSHUA XI. 23.

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel, according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

A WISE and politic Roman once declared his preference of the most unequal peace, to the most just and necessary war, in which his country could be engaged. He had good reason for his choice. Wars between two rival nations seldom make a profitable return to either. If unsuccessful, they terminate in ruin or disgrace. Even when their issue is more fortunate, they very imperfectly repay the mass of individual suffering and woe inflicted upon the victors and the vanquished. Some territory perhaps is gained, so vast and unwieldly, as to be an incum-

brance, rather than an advantage to the people whose dominion it extends: or some confined and barren surface has been acquired, which might have been digged up, and cast into the sea, at half the expence of its purchase, and by the easy labour of half the thousands who shed their blood to obtain it.

But amidst the sanguinary pages that constitute so large a part of the history of men and nations, one war has been recorded, so righteous in its origin, so wonderful in its progress, so glorious in its consequences, as to silence every objection which the most ardent lover of peace and concord could possibly make. In this contest the hosts of Israel and the inhabitants of Canaan were the opposing parties. The ally of the former was God himself—of the latter, their numbers, their presumption, or their despair. The consequence of victory was a name and a place in the blessedness of the promised land. The triumph was also gained—one instance only excepted, without the loss of a soldier from among the armies of the Lord.

Of similar character is that spiritual warfare, in which the Christian must engage with the enemies of his eternal peace. There are foes of deadly and unmitigable enmity, with whom he must be incessantly contending. In this strife he is called to be a soldier by the especial ap-

pointment of God himself, who is the Almighty helper and ally of his soul. Jesus Christ, the heavenly Joshua is his leader and commander. If he gain the victory, those holy exertions which the all-sufficient Spirit of grace prompted and assisted, will be immeasurably overpaid, in the glory and happiness of the promised land above.

Through such a conflict had the armies of Israel passed, at the point of time recorded in the text. Joshua who had led them on to conquest, was now commanded to divide the countries which they had subdued among their tribes, and to put each into possession of its allotted inheritance. The transaction is quoted by St. Paul,[1] with unequivocal reference to the blessedness of life eternal, in which the Christian's struggle with the powers of darkness shall terminate. If Jesus, (or as it should be translated Joshua, both here and in the kindred passage,[2] the names being entirely the same, and the sense absolutely requiring it)—if Jesus had given them final and everlasting rest, then would not David, who lived five hundred years after the entrance of Israel into Canaan, have spoken of another day. "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God."

[1] Heb. iv. 7—9 [2] Acts vii. 45.

The whole army of Jesus Christ, and every individual soldier who fights beneath the banner of the cross, has an immediate and most important interest in the glad event which this history illustrates and typifies. Men and brethren, unto you is the word of this salvation sent. May the good Spirit of God enable us profitably to consider,

I. THE DIVISION OF CANAAN AMONG THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL.

II. THE REST OF THE PEOPLE FROM THEIR LONG AND ARDUOUS WARFARE.

I. Every enemy had been subdued, and the dreadful sentence of extermination—wrung, as it were, by the guilty nations, from the unwilling indignation of the Most High, was executed against them. "All the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves; but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them; neither left they any to breathe." Nothing now remained, but to give each tribe a portion of the land which the might of God had enabled them to conquer in battle. The manner in which the necessary partition should be made had been already settled by divine appointment. "The land shall be divided by lot; according to the names of

the tribes of their fathers shall they inherit."[1] In obedience to this determination, Joshua proceeded: and we are sure,

(1.) *That the country which the people received was sufficient for all their tribes.* "To many, said God to Moses, thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance, to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him."[2] Great indeed would have been the disappointment, and loud the indignation, if any man had found his toil and danger unrewarded, and himself altogether left with no dwelling to inhabit, no corn to reap, no vines to press, no hills out of which he might dig brass, no fountains at which his thirst might be allayed. So far however, was any man from such a failure, that the extent of the land, compared with the numbers to whom it should be given, demanded a gradual conquest, lest it should be laid waste, and lest the beasts of the field should prevail against them.

My Christian brethren, and fellow soldiers in the heavenly war, is not such the character of the land of bliss and vision which you aspire to possess? Is that heavenly country, of which some glimpses are reflected to a believer's eye

[1] Numbers xxvi. 25. [2] xxvi. 54.

from the page of revelation, a confined and narrow heritage? Vast as will be the capacities of the spirits of just men made perfect—numerous as will be the inhabitants of heaven—and eternally as they will continue to receive the glory that shall be revealed, will not that dwelling which the immensity of God alone can fill, amply supply the wants of every one who shall be admitted within its borders? Even now, in the unsearchable breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, countless as are the thousands whom it has embraced, there is a place for more. Even here, in the present kingdom of heaven, as it is exhibited in the Saviour's gospel, there is a pale wide enough—there is a provision liberal enough to admit and cherish every individual who professes to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life. Fear not then, that your portion in these blessings shall be withheld. Yet there is room—room enough for you; and God himself invites you to enter and take possession. The Canaan of eternal rest will be peopled with mingled inhabitants. Angels, and Archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, all the hierarchies of the blessed, with all the ransomed and holy people of God, from the east and from the west, from

the north and from the south, from every age, and climate, and tongue, and nation, and language,—prophets, and apostles, martyrs, and confessors—the princes of the earth, and the lowliest of its inhabitants, whose names—elsewhere long forgotten, are written in the book of life—a great multitude whom no man can number, will receive their portion of those blessings that are at God's right hand for evermore. None will be straitened, none dissatisfied. That eternal Saviour, whose kingdom is to be the abode, and whose love is to be the portion of his followers, will fulfil to the uttermost the most enlarged interpretation of his promise—"In my Father's house are many mansions." When the fountain of eternal life is opened in heaven, and its stream flows without ceasing, into the soul of every inhabitant there, he will possess as much of the fulness of joy, as his nature can comprehend; and the utmost ambition of bliss in that world of light can ask no more. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God—O land of the risen Immanuel, which only the ages of life everlasting can fully verify; but which Christian faith in some degree apprehends, even from the darkness and distance of this sinful, low, and gloomy world. None who enter there *shall hunger or thirst, any more: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne*

shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters. The tree of life shall yield its unfailing fruit, and the river of life, clear as crystal, shall pour forth its full stream for ever.

(2.) *This division of Canaan was made with the utmost impartiality.* The lots were drawn in Shiloh, before the Lord, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.[1] His immediate eye watched over the process—his unerring wisdom directed the result. The boundaries of each portion were distinctly drawn, and the inheritance of every tribe exactly defined. A carnal, selfish race, like that of Israel, eager only for present good, and prone to murmur, and rebel upon every imaginary disappointment, would have been watchful, each to take advantage of his neighbour. Each would arrogate the fairest portion to himself, and advance a claim for compensation, to which his services were ill entitled. All this evil was prevented by the wise appointment of God, who allotted the hill and valley, the corn and pasture, the brooks and rivers, the towns and cities, with a perfection of righteousness, against which it was the highest absurdity, as well as the most daring impiety to murmur. Envy and malice, strife and civil war, hatred and bloodshed, were thus shut out by an appeal

[1] Joshua xix. 51.

to that unanswerable question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Survey, my brethren, your heritage of present mercy—your prospect for the land of promise, eternal in the heavens. Is God any respecter of persons? Is it not better, that your earthly condition, your place in the appointments of temporal good or sorrow, should be determined by the infinite wisdom of your heavenly Father, than by your own ignorance? Is it not more desirable, that your religious distinctions, and the mansion in which you are to repose, through the unbroken day of heavenly bliss, should be appointed by him who knows your wants and capacities with infallible certainty, than if the choice rested with yourselves? Ye discern less of the plans of eternal wisdom, than the insect, whose eye scarcely takes in the surface of the clod on which he stands, can see of the world around him. How then could ye discover what your own best heritage may be, and the mode of securing it, in entire harmony with all the purposes of God? Is every hair of your head numbered? Doth not a sparrow fall to the ground without the knowledge and permission of your heavenly Father? And shall not they for whom the great mystery of godliness was exhibited—they whose redemption was purchased by Jesus Christ, thankfully refer their state to his appointment?

Whatever be the issue, may not they cry with the chastened patriarch, *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away—blessed be the name of the Lord?* May not each of them look forward in the full assurance of hope, and say, *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day?* Devote yourselves to the service of your heavenly Father; and you shall have a due reward. "Go ye into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right that shall ye receive." What, let me ask, are your circumstances? Are you straitened in the portion of worldly good which you expected? It may be so; but if ye be the servants of him, "who is able to supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus," the lines are fallen to you in a pleasant place, and you have a goodly heritage. *They that love the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good.* Learn, "in whatsoever state you are, therewith to be content." Here you have no continuing city, but you seek one to come; one which will neither elude your search, nor disappoint you when you take possession of it, and dwell in it for ever. Suppose ye, that a faithful Israelite whose dwelling had been appointed at Shiloh would have murmured, if to him had been awarded the very worst of all the subdivisions in the

land? Far otherwise. He would have said, and wisely said, "True, my portion is intrinsically little worth: but it has placed me, where I may behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and visit his tabernacle. It has placed me, where I can most readily commune with him, and approach the sanctuary of his love. I would not therefore, exchange that lowly and unfavourable place, where God hath appointed the bounds of my habitation, for the fairest heritage where he neither dwells nor visits." Is the lot of any servant of Christ cast in affliction and sorrow? "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Improve the dispensation; be contented, be thankful; and *the light affliction, which is but for a moment, shall work for thee a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Then shalt thou survey all the evil (as blindness and impatience once regarded the mysterious dealing of thy heavenly father), and all the various circumstances of thy earthly pilgrimage, from the brightness of the land of vision; and find motives of unceasing praise to the Most High for the mercy that ordered and sent them all. Joseph is now blessing his Redeemer for his prison; Job, for his desolation; Jeremiah, for his dungeon; and Lazarus, for his sores. They rejoice in the wisdom which appointed these trials, and which has made all work together for their

good throughout eternity.[1] Bear ye then a while, and the scene will change. When the voice shall reach your ears, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," the cares and gloomy imaginings of this little corner of existence will die into oblivion, or serve but to be contrasted with your bliss, as a dark spot upon the sun's disk, with the unclouded glories of the orb around it. Are ye, my brethren, in prosperity and peace? It is from above; not of your own desert, not of your own attainment. Be humbled when you compare the gift with your own unworthiness. Forget not the hand that gave the good, and hold it ready to be resigned at his will. Consider it, as one of those lesser streams which flow from the unsealed fountain of love in Jesus Christ, and be quickened in his service. *The lot is cast into the lap but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.*

II. When this righteous division had taken place, the land rested from war: and THAT STATE OF REPOSE ENSUED, WHICH THE HISTORY NEXT CALLS US TO EXAMINE. All the kingdoms of Canaan were not indeed fully subdued: but the power of the confederacy was utterly broken. The foes of Israel fled, trembling and divided; and it was no longer necessary, that all the

[1] Serle's Horæ Solitariæ, p. 148.

host should go forth to war. A few from each tribe amply sufficed to overcome the feeble survivors of former slaughter. Some Canaanites, indeed, were left to try the people; and this remnant afterwards became the scourge of their infidelity and sin. But henceforward their weary marches were to cease. Henceforward there would be no danger from the assaults of open, or the stratagems of secret foes. Even the dreaded and gigantic Anakim, who had defended their mountains, and hitherto resisted, were now subdued; so that the terror of them vanished, and was forgotten.

Joshua then gave Israel repose: but was there none beyond? Yes—if he had given them final and eternal rest, none other would have been promised of the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David. *There* REMAINETH *therefore a rest for the people of God.* To them then, should the minister of the gospel of Christ draw near, and say, Are ye oppressed with the weight of your armour, weary with the length of your combat, discouraged by the number of your foes? Are the gigantic sons of Anak, and the hosts of Satan still arrayed in might against you? Look to the cross. In that sign you shall conquer. Look to the Head and Captain of your salvation. In his omnipotence shall you triumph. Look to the approaching end of your warfare, even the

salvation of your souls. Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. Joshua made war a long time with all the kings of Canaan; but the victory, at last was splendid and secure. Six years did the strife continue, the seventh was a year of sabbaths, and the land had rest from war. Your week of toil will soon expire; and when the sun of the eternal Sabbath dawns, with its light will issue forth a voice from the throne of God, saying, "Come ye blessed children of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." After the creation of this earth, its maker rested from his labours: and as the first Sabbath was ushered in, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Imagine then, the rapture that will swell every heart —the song of praise that will burst from every angelic voice in heaven, when the former things shall have passed away, and the ruin of this guilty desolate world shall be succeeded by an eternal state, filled with the unchanging glories of him who maketh all things new. Imagine, if you can, how deep a fountain of bliss will be opened in heaven, when all the armies of the redeemed who shall have escaped the bondage of sin, and overcome their enemies, by the blood of the Lamb, shall enter into a rest, like the rest of him who gave it, for ever glorious—a rest,

which no sorrow may interrupt—a peace which no enemy may disturb.

Great would be the happiness, many and loud the congratulations of Israel, when the land was conquered, divided, and enjoyed. Will the holy servants of God then, take possession of their eternal heritage in gloom and silence? Will they not rather turn to their fellow-soldiers in the accomplished warfare, each crying, as he surveys with unspeakable delight the fair heritage of unalienable mercies, with which he has been invested, "Come hither ye that love God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul?" Now ye may be sailing slowly, like Paul in his last voyage; the adverse winds of temptation hardly suffering you. Neither sun, nor stars, in earthly, and hardly in spiritual comfort, may for many days appear. No small tempest may be laying upon you; and hope itself may be almost taken away: but the haven of rest is near, and the danger will soon be past. Now ye have your mercies, as Benjamin had Joseph's cup; you find them at a distance from God. But when you shall dwell in the Goshen of his love, and receive your portion from his full and open hand; when you shall live in his house and presence, and God shall be all [1] and in all, you will reckon

[1] Baxter's Works, III. 41. Fol.

"that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in you." *Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

When Joshua gave the land to the tribes of Israel, he had a portion for himself; and lived long and honoured among the people whom he had so often led to victory, and who had received their inheritance according to his decision. So, when that heavenly Joshua, whom God the Father hath appointed, to obtain, and to divide the glory of the mediatorial kingdom, shall have opened its gates to all believers, they shall be for ever with the Lord. When he shall have allotted the thrones, and sceptres, and posts of spiritual sacrifice, to those who shall be kings and priests to God, he will not leave them alone, but will come to them and take up his abode with them. *The tabernacle of God will be with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.* The throne of the Lamb also, shall be raised within the streets of the eternal city; *and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.*

With such a prospect of termination to your

spiritual conflict, will ye then, my Christian brethren, faint beneath the burden and heat of the day of battle? Will ye draw back unto perdition? Will ye fall away like the mixed multitude that came forth, they knew not why, from Egypt, murmured in the hour of trial, and were found wanting when they were weighed in the balances of actual temptation, and self-denial? Is it for the soldiers of Jesus Christ to leave their station in the battle, and to decline the war? Will ye expect and seek rest, and peace short of victory in Canaan, and the possession of that good land, which the unchangeable promise of God is pledged to bestow upon you? The Jews were admitted into the country of earthly promise. They ate of its corn; they drank of its new wine; they delighted themselves in its abundance: but it was not their final rest. They soon left it behind; and the faithful among them sought that better and enduring country, of which the material Canaan was the mere type and emblem. My brethren, ye must not remain contented with your immediate possession. The privileges of the land of promise may have been largely bestowed upon you, in the abundance of those spiritual mercies, which the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ imparts to every sincere and holy servant of God. But, with all

their brightness, all their endearing character, they are mere shadows of the glory that shall be revealed, and means to attain it. Seek, then, another country, which lies before you, beaming with the radiance of unfailing promise. *Where your treasure is, there let your hearts be also.* Ye also, whom the God of this world hath so far blinded, that ye bound your views of happiness within the mean and dark horizon of earthly and sinful good, may the finger of that Saviour, whom you are neglecting, touch the eye of your mind, and make you see the perishing shadows, which, in deep and awful delusion you are mistaking for blessings which only can satisfy the soul. *Arise and depart hence, for this is not your rest; because it is polluted. Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life.*

(1.) Every picture, however bright and sunny, has also its points of shade and gloom. So, while this history typically describes the rest and happiness of the true Israel, it also enforces the solemn remark, that their repose in the Canaan above *will be accompanied by the destruction of those who know not God; and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Nearly all the nations of the land perished in battle, or in the slaughter that succeeded the capture of their cities. The miserable survivors were,

with few exceptions, driven forth from their habitations; and the victory of Israel was the judgment of Canaan. *Woe, then, to him that striveth with his Maker!* Woe to him, who, amidst all the invitations of compassion, from an offended God, as they are uttered from the cross of his Son's redemption, will not come thither unto Jesus, that he may have life! Woe to him, whom the love of this present world, the stupifying power of a careless mind, or the infatuations of sin, cause to neglect the voice of mercy, that would save his soul from utter death! Ye, who are self-destroyed, for lack of that knowledge which only God's enlightening Spirit can bestow, do ye reflect that, among the dwellers in that bliss of heaven, which cannot be understood, until it be enjoyed, were once unnumbered angels, who kept not their first estate, but rebelled against the majesty of God, and would have usurped from him the throne of the universe? Where are they now? They were cast down from their height of felicity, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the judgment of the great day. They have left seats of glory, to be occupied, perhaps, by those believing and holy Christians, who are the travail of the Redeemer's soul. *If God then spared not the angels that sinned, take heed lest he spare not you.*

Now is the hour of divine forbearance, in which the cross and intercession of Jesus Christ are pleading with offended and Almighty justice, in your behalf. Now is the hour in which the Spirit of God, though you hear and heed not, is pleading with you, to repent, believe, and live. Shall all this labour of love be vain; and will ye continue in hostility to your Maker, Saviour, Sanctifier, and Judge? *To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.* The time of retribution must come. In that dreadful morning of the resurrection, the eternal Joshua of their salvation shall conduct his servants into heaven, and reward them with a distinguished portion in its eternity of glory. But they, whose guilty rebellion no offers of mercy, no threat of wrath, sufficed to subdue, will be punished with final and hopeless exclusion from the vision of God, and the participation of his kingdom. Such a doom, my erring brethren, impends over your heads. Whither then, will ye flee in the terrors of that coming day? Will you escape the eye of God, and conceal yourselves among the dark places of the earth? Alas! its elements will melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, will be burned up in the all-devouring conflagration which shall then be enkindled. Will you seek concealment amidst the unknown

heavens? They shall vanish, like a shrivelled scroll, in the consuming fierceness of that flame. But, as the last resource of despair, may not that flame itself reduce you to ashes, and destroy you, so that nothing, either of soul or body, shall remain, upon which the judge can inflict his sentence of wrath and woe? Alas, your souls are each a spark of God's immortal nature, which cannot be quenched. They will have already begun to date their eternal doom of misery, from that day, in which you died impenitent. The body also, to which each spirit must be joined, for a community of misery, will be raised incorruptible, so as not to be destroyed, even by the worm that never dieth, or consumed by the fire that is not quenched. Will ye resist the Almighty to the last, as the Anakim resisted his people? *Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like him?* Remember, that you are now contending, and must then contend with him, whose omnipotence hurled the archangels from their seats, in utter impotence, and helplessness. Bring not the matter, I implore you, to such an awful extremity. Now are ye where conditions of peace may reach you. Now may ye turn, in the sincerity of repentance, to your inviting God, become the children of his adoption, and the heirs of his kingdom. If the hour

of salvation should be allowed to pass by unimproved—if the fountain of mercy, in the atoning efficacy of the Redeemer's cross, and the sanctifying work of his gracious Spirit, should close upon you—if death should find you at enmity with the everlasting Leader of the armies of Jehovah, your exclusion from the Canaan of his rest, would leave you to that most awful aggravation of hopeless sorrow, which contrasts the sufferer's state, with what it might have been, if he had not become the destroyer of his own soul. *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!* Shall it, indeed, visit you so long, and end at last without improvement? Then hear the alternative: *Prepare to meet thy God.*

(2.) *The settlement of Israel in the land of promise cannot fail to illustrate that all-important doctrine of scripture—By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.* Were the chosen tribes thus distinguished, because they had a more perfect obedience to offer, and therefore a more valuable reward to claim, than the men of other kingdoms around them? Hear the record, and judge for yourselves. "The Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people." Many were their offences,

and often, had not Moses interceded in their behalf, would their very name and memory have been blotted from the earth. No Israelite could claim the humblest portion in the promised land, by merit of his own, but obtained it, as an undeserved gift, from the loving-kindness of God. And you, my Christian brethren, if he have given you repentance unto life—if he have enabled you to believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye may be saved—if he be guiding you by his counsel, and will afterwards receive you to glory—if he be strengthening you to run the way of his commandments—and if ye be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation, who made you to differ: and what have you that ye have not received? *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved you, even when ye were dead in sins hath quickened you, that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his kindness towards you; ..... through Christ Jesus.* The more you experience of that kindness here, the more truly will you be humbled by the sense of your own undeservings. And when ye reach the glory that shall be revealed, the more will every affection of your hearts unite in ascribing all the praise of your salvation "to him who loved you, and washed you from your sins, in his own blood."

Continue now to walk humbly with your God. Let no self-complacent feeling have entrance into your minds. That a Christian should be elevated by his Saviour's goodness, would be as inconsistent, as that the dumb man, when his tongue was loosed by that Saviour's almighty mercy, should have boasted of the eloquence with which he praised his benefactor. Have ye paid any thing for the astonishing love of God, thus unequivocally communicated to you? any thing for the rich hopes and success of that gospel, which is the power of God to your salvation? Have ye purchased the atonement and intercession of Jesus Christ, by which your sins are pardoned, and your soul brought into covenant with the Father of mercies? Have ye bought with a price that work of the new creation to righteousness and true holiness, which the Holy Ghost has effected within you: or that land of unimaginable felicity which the promise of him, who cannot lie, has pledged to give you, when you have fought the good fight, finished your course, and kept the faith? No: ye have rather earned the wages of sin, which is death. The gift of God, which his grace has freely bestowed, is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thanks be to him for this unspeakable gift! Is then an act of love, so free and gracious, unfriendly, as some assert,

to the growth and exercise of Christian morality? Give the objection its most full and triumphant contradiction and refutation, by the consistent holiness of your lives. Let the adversaries of this blessed doctrine, which is the only foundation of a sinner's hope toward God, have no encouragement from its abuse in *you*. *Walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory. As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation and godliness.*

SERMON XX.

JOSHUA'S REMONSTRANCE WITH THE ISRAELITES UPON THEIR WANT OF EXERTION, TO FINISH THE WAR, AND TO TAKE POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND.

JOSHUA XVIII. 3.

And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?

A STRIKING inconsistency clings to the character of man, through every period of its developement, from the cradle to the grave. All future temporal good appears before him in the most attractive form, and he rushes eagerly forward to possess it. But when he has succeeded, its brightness is dimmed, its beauty fades, the interest he once felt for it declines; and it is cast aside for some new object, to be again followed with equal anxiety, and rejected with equal facility. Such a constitution of mind was doubtless the appointment of divine mercy; in order that every thing earthly, bearing upon its sur-

face the broad stamp of vanity and vexation of spirit, might second the pleading of that voice, which cries, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

Unhappily, however, men are very differently affected in the all-important concern of their salvation. Instead of improving every advancement in religion, by making it the point of departure for a new attainment, they too generally remain satisfied with some little progress in the divine life. Meanly contented with their dwarfish growth, they aim not to reach "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Idly imagining themselves to have already attained, they sit down to enjoyment, repose, and self-admiration, when they should be hungering and thirsting after the offered righteousness of the gospel, that they might be filled.

Such were the circumstances of the Israelites. Some of their tribes had now obtained distinct inheritances. The land awaited a more accurate examination and division of the remainder. Yet delighted with present ease, they wasted in utter listlessness, those invaluable hours, which should have been spent in the complete destruction of their enemies, and the final occupation of Canaan. From this deep slumber, as dishonourable to God, as to themselves, did the voice of Joshua awaken them, intreating them

to arise from their supineness, accomplish the glorious work before them, and do the bidding of the Lord of Hosts.

"There remaineth," as we have seen, "a rest for the people of God." *Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being made us of entering it, any of you should seem to come short of it.* If ye are slumbering away the irrevocable season of your combat for the bliss of heaven, in thoughtlessness and security, does a justly offended God leave you to the consequences of the lethargy, without the utterance of a warning voice? No: the head and captain of your salvation, the spiritual Joshua of the everlasting gospel, addresses you in words of mercy, expostulates with you, as did his type with the Israelites in Canaan, and cries, "How long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?" O God of the Spirits of all flesh! may that voice reach our hearts; that "laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, we may run with patience the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus;" to his cross, as the appointed atonement for our sins—to his example, as the pattern of our lives.

Suffer me therefore, to put the question in the text solemnly to your consciences, associated with three kindred subjects of inquiry, which,

by the divine blessing, may enable you to estimate the wisdom or folly of remaining in listless estrangement from the blessings of your inheritance in the rest of God.

I. Why then are ye slack to go to possess the land? IS NOT THE GOODLY PORTION FREELY PROVIDED, AND WAITING YOUR ACCEPTANCE?

The different nations of Canaan had been subdued before the Israelites; and the few remaining enemies would be easily overcome by the tribes, in whose respective territories they might still linger. The Lord God of their fathers had given them the land. Four hundred and eighty years had elapsed, since it had been solemnly promised to Abraham; and they were now eating the corn, and drinking the wine of the country, as a proof that the truth of Jehovah had not deceived them. Their own experience had testified the power of the Most High, to conduct them within its borders, and to give them victory over every enemy. Very little more remained to perform, before the triumph would be completed, the land fully possessed, and the high office of Joshua finally accomplished. The same hand by which they had been miraculously led, would continue to direct them—the same omnipotence to defend them—the same love to supply them—and the same favour to bless them. Why then, should

they remain on the very threshold of entire success? Why halt in the full career of victory? Why remain contented with a partial settlement, when the whole land lay before them "in the length of it and in the breadth of it," inviting them to an entire and undisturbed possession? Their brethren were enjoying the portion which had been allotted them: and the example of their success should at once have been the reproach, and the encouragement of men, who, in language at least, aspired to dwell, not like their fathers, as strangers and pilgrims in the land, but to hold it in ample sovereignty, as the heritage allotted them by the hand of God.

I ask you then, my brethren, who profess to have entered within the spiritual boundaries of the kingdom of heaven, but who, instead of going on towards perfection, are loitering in self-indulgence and worldliness, does no analogy exist between your case, and that of the ungrateful, thoughtless Israelites? Hath not the Lord God of your fathers freely given you a title to the country of peace and rest in heaven? May not "an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?" His hand broke asunder your chains, when ye lay helpless in the land of your spiritual bondage—when

Satan was your task-master, sin your service, and death your wages? He paid the full ransom of your deliverance. He made a way for you to escape, when you were beset with difficulties, as impassable in your own strength, as were the mountains and forts, the Red Sea, and the Egyptians, when Israel was shut up among them in the wilderness. The pillar of the cloud has led you in the day of prosperity, and its light of fire in the gloom of affliction. The bounty of a gracious God has largely ministered to your spiritual need, in sacramental mercies, as he poured manna from heaven, and made water gush from the rock of Horeb, to follow his fainting heritage through the desert. Ye have engaged with your enemies, while your great Intercessor was praying for you on the hill—while infinite love and almighty power held up his hands, that ye might conquer. Often endangered, and even worsted, ye have not been destroyed. The same hand which took you forth from the captivity and death of sin, has still led you onward, cheered with increasing hope of reposing in the kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ. As your day, so has your strength been. When ye have been disposed to faint beneath your warfare, and to shrink from the difficulties of the combat, have ye not heard within your hearts the animating voice of that God and

Saviour who appoints your station in this holy war, "To him that overcometh will I give to sit upon my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father upon his throne?" *Now is your salvation nearer than when ye believed.* While ye are in the midst of the spiritual blessings which the gospel opens to the need of lost and dying transgressors—while the scriptures and the public ordinances of religion are as widely opened to your approach, as the porches of the pool of Bethesda to the sick of old, will ye refuse to profit by the mercy? While your Redeemer stands at the door of your hearts, and knocks for admission—while the pardon of God, his peace which passeth all understanding, the sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life, and the unfathomable depths of joy and glory which it will open to the soul, are placed within your reach by the rich bounty of your heavenly Father, will ye be contented to remain at a distance, as strangers and foreigners, instead of becoming "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God?" The feast is spread, the voice is spoken, "All things are now ready, come ye to the marriage." Is there then, in the little circle of perishing enjoyments around you, is there, even among the present spiritual privileges, with which divine love has invested you, any thing sufficiently

great to satisfy the aspirations of one who looks for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life? Blessings temporal and for ever await your acceptance; and will ye rest short of their full possession? Will ye not aim to obtain an interest in them for both worlds? Will ye not appropriate them to yourselves; and say of him, in whose goodness they originate, "This God is my God, for ever and ever?" Others have already entered into present rest, by believing the gospel, and fulfilling the demands of that spiritual kingdom which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Behold the fair inheritance which they possess, in the abundant mercies of your common Saviour; and hasten onwards to the same distinctions. A great cloud of witnesses encompasses you. Having fought the good fight of faith, they are now surrounding the throne of their Leader and Saviour, with ceaseless songs of adoring love and wonder. Will ye linger here, when the mansions of their rest are also thrown open for your reception: and when you like them, may join the armies of the living God, in the service of his eternal temple? *We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end—that ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.* You

march beneath the banner which led them to victory. You have resources in the same all-sufficient Spirit which supplied their necessities. By the grace of God they only *are* what you *may be*. *Arise then and behold the land, for it is very good: and are ye still? Be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land.*

II. In order that this indifference may appear yet more inexcusable, I ask, WHETHER THE ATTAINMENT OF SALVATION BE NOT THE GREAT BUSINESS OF LIFE, TO WHICH YE SHOULD BE DEVOTED? Little indeed, would the Israelites have profited by the glowing descriptions of Canaan—little, by what their eyes had seen of its excellence—little, by the perils they had undergone, the dangers they had escaped, and the manifest interference of God in their behalf, if, after all these encouragements, they had refused to continue their exertions a short time longer; and had bartered away, for present ease and enjoyment, the rich and ample heritage which the Most High designed for their possession. They had longed ardently to behold it, while they traversed the howling wilderness. They had chided with Moses, because it was withheld from their unbelief and sin. Great then, would have been the inconsistency, great the guilt, and great the eventual disappointment, if they had "sat down to eat and to drink, and had risen up to play,"

when every power of the body, and every energy of the spirit should have been employed, to secure the appointed land for themselves, and for their children.

My brethren, life and death, blessing and the curse, are set before you; and the alternative depends upon your own choice. You are engaged in a warfare which leaves no middle path between victory and defeat, triumph and disgrace, happiness and woe. If all the mercies, of which you have partaken, and which you are still invited to partake, have not produced such an advancement in the divine life, as carries the soul heavenward, with increasing vigour—if you are not "using all diligence to make your calling and election sure"—if, with so much to excite and compel, ye are resting short of the goal, never was danger more great, or self-deception more alarming. It may be, that you are let and hindered in running the race that is set before you, by the cares or pleasures of this world. It may be, that the good fruit of the word of God is choked within your hearts, by the love of riches, the desire of splendour, or that pleaded and plausible necessity of providing for those who depend upon your exertions. Give any, or all of these attractions their full importance —place them in the opposite balance to that in which your eternal salvation lies—weigh them against this

one mighty interest, and they will be found wanting. Alas! *What shall it profit a man if he shall have gained the whole world, if he lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* I grant, that many considerations may press themselves upon your regard, with an importance that would justly be irresistible, if it were not "appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." With this future reality before our eyes, and all the glorious, or dreadful consequences by which it must be attended, remember, that "one thing is needful." Whatsoever is unconnected with that great subject, towards which every more serious thought should be directed, as steadily and as intently as the magnet points northward, is only "as a gravel stone compared with the sand of the sea, or as a thousand years to the days of eternity." Your life, in its best and only worthy acceptation, consists not in seeking "what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed," and how ye shall enjoy the present, and be aggrandized for the future; but in holy resolve and aim to seek the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Be your portion of present advantages, whether temporal or spiritual, what it may, let it not so absorb your minds, that ye may rest upon it, and seek nothing beyond. Do not live so much

beneath your privileges, as to be satisfied with the mere shadow of good; while the pure, perfect, unsatiating, and everlasting reality, solicits you in vain. You may enjoy much of this world's advantage, and be occupied by many of its engagements: but the one will be a miserable substitute for the everlasting mercies which it may lead you to neglect; and the other, an inadequate apology for the guilt of that indifference.

Some objector may here reason in his heart, and cry, 'This is a hard saying, who can bear it? Am I to forsake the worldly calling in which I am lawfully and honourably engaged? Am I, not only to abandon all further acquisition of wealth, but to look upon that which I have already obtained, as a heavy burden, which I may hardly keep without making shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience?' Such, my brethren, is not the command of the gospel; and ill would that minister declare its spirit and requirements, who should so wildly interpret the counsels of God to his flock. Go forward in that pursuit, in which, by the appointment of divine Providence ye have begun. Use lawful, moderate, and chastized exertions for the attainment of a sufficient competence to answer the demands of your station and families. And may that measure of success attend

your labours, which the wisdom and goodness of God may see most advantageous to your present comfort and eternal welfare! *Be not slothful in business:* but withal, remember to be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.* Labour not unduly for the meat which perisheth: but earnestly for that which endureth unto everlasting life. Avoid the evil of the men of Israel, when Joshua spake the expostulation in the text. They were enjoying the plunder of their enemies, and the plenty of Canaan, when they ought to have girded on their armour, and unsheathed their swords, and put themselves in array, and gone forth steadfastly to possess the land, and extirpate the enemies who might still continue within it. Let not your earthly comforts, your love of ease, and that "evil heart of unbelief which departs from the living God," draw you aside from the great business of eternity. Beware, lest the God of this world blind the eyes of your mind, or so far distort their powers of spiritual discernment, as to impress you with a belief, that the best exercise of human wisdom consists in a community of feeling with him who cried, "Soul thou hast much goods laid up in store for thee for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Neither suffer ye yourselves to indulge the sad mistake of imagining, that the strongest affec-

tions of your hearts, and the most zealous efforts of your time and ability, may be devoted to the attainment of present and earthly advantages, while the glories of eternal salvation will be gained by some trifling sacrifice, some feeble wish, some formal service. This be far from you. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.* Temptations to forget the land of your future rest, and to postpone the awful duty of working out your salvation with fear and trembling, will daily assault you, and bid you repose for awhile, contented with the progress already made. What shall be the answer with which every heart among you should be prepared? *I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease whilst I leave it and come down to you?* Ye do not lightly yield to the seductions that lie in wait to detach you from worldly employments; and ye do well to resist them. What then, should be the steadfast purpose—what the invincible ardour—what the singleness of aim—what the zeal of action, with which you should endeavour to serve God, and make good your interest in the mercies of his everlasting covenant? Invest the things of earth and heaven with their due proportions in

your regard. Bear each upon your heart, in that degree of affection which it is entitled to demand from every man, whose mind has been taught by the pages of the Saviour's gospel, and enlightened by the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit. Choose between them accordingly: and while others are permitting life, with all its opportunities of salvation, to flit by them unperceived, because their eyes are closed in a fitful dream of present enjoyment, be ye like men whose treasure is above. Look upward from the wretched vanities of time and sense, to Him whose blood was the invaluable purchase of your redemption; and say, as each owns Him to be the giver of life eternal, and the sole author of every good, *Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.*

III. And now my brethren, let me once more ask, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you? HAVE YE NOT LOST TIME ENOUGH ALREADY? Had the Israelites pressed onward to Canaan, in faith and zeal, they would surely have escaped the long sojourn of forty years in the wilderness, and the additional seven that elapsed between the passage of Jordan and the final conquest of the land. Much wandering and weariness, much disappointment and rebel-

lion, much sin and murmuring, would have been spared; and they would have entered into rest with minds unembittered by the recollection of mercies abused, and God provoked. If we look inward to the experience of our own hearts—if we recollect the testimony of years past and gone, they will surely speak of long and guilty inattention to the duty of serving God who hath called us to his kingdom and glory. There are periods in the life of man, resembling those eminences over which the traveller occasionally crosses, and whence, as he looks backward, he may see the deviations he has made from the true path, the mazes in which he has been bewildered, and the worthless pursuits in which he has wasted the unreturning hours allotted for his journey. At one of those periods have we arrived.[1] Another year has been taken away from our little date of life; and as respects all the purposes which the unsearchable compassions of God in Christ Jesus meant it to subserve, is now with those beyond the flood. Another year has opened upon us, *Having received help of God, we continue unto this day.* The fig-tree has been unfruitful, and its barrenness has provoked the terrible sentence, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the

[1] Preached at the commencement of the year 1825.

ground?" But the voice of our irresistible Advocate has prevailed for a longer probation. We are here this day, in the journey of life, as Israel in the march between Mizpeh and Shen, between time and eternity, assembled, as I hope, under the influence of that grateful love which the preserver of our lives well demands, to raise an altar in our inmost hearts, which may be inscribed with the impressive title, "Ebenezer; hitherto the Lord hath helped us." Look back then upon that year through which Almighty power and goodness have conducted your footsteps; and what do you behold! O, how many offers of love have you heard, which, unworthy as were the ambassadors by whom they were proclaimed, would have become the power of God to your salvation, if ye had opened your hearts to admit them! How many opportunities have you enjoyed of studying the scriptures, and "receiving with meekness that engrafted word which was able to save your souls!" How many have been the gracious calls of that Saviour, who would have convinced you of sin,—in the laver of whose blood ye might have been cleansed from the stain of guilt—by the work of whose intercession your cause might have been maintained at the right hand of God—and from whose exhaustless fulness ye might have received strength to produce fruit, as the branch

derives nurture from the vine! How many seasons of prayer have passed away, in which ye might have offered the sacrifice of the heart, and wrestled with God successfully for blessings infinite in value, and eternal in duration, instead of using the cold and formal language of a mere lip-service, and external homage! How many opportunities have ye possessed of walking with God, like Enoch, and of illustrating the holy character of his religion so unequivocally, that men must have taken knowledge of you that you had been with Jesus! Such, my brethren, might have been the record of the year through which we have passed. What is the reality? Let the conscience of every one who hears me, let my own conscience, as indeed and in truth it does, return a righteous verdict, and say, while it covers us with shame and confusion of face, "Guilty, guilty." And what should be the cry uttered by every one of us, in arrest of judgment, and in bar of condemnation? *God be merciful to me a sinner!*

What then remains? Redeem the time. How may this be done? Shall we recall the months, and weeks, and days, of the departed year? As well might we stand upon the sea shore, and cry to the advancing ocean, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther," with hope that it would obey the bidding, as bring back one moment

of the past.—No, my brethren: our only practicable mode of redeeming time is by an increasing zeal and diligence to do the work of God, and to attain by his grace a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Forgetting the things that are behind, save only to contrast them with what they might have been, to be humbled by the comparison, and to value still more the atoning mercy of the cross, by which the sin we have incurred may be pardoned, let us reach forth toward those things that are before, "not counting ourselves to have attained, or to be already perfect;" Rather let us *add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity: that we may henceforth neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Why are ye slack to go to possess the land? Suppose ye, that Satan, the implacable enemy of man ever intermits his designs, or rests from his plots and snares of death? The great lights of heaven pursue not their courses with a motion more unwearied, or more silent, than are his attempts to ruin men. Does God the father slacken in the exercises of his goodness? Every mercy we receive—nay, every breath we draw,

declares the contrary. Does the neglected Saviour cease from his work and labour of love? Witness the ordinances of his house, the calls of his solicitude, the gospel of his grace, and all the astonishing process of his mediatorial work. Does the Holy Spirit swerve from his compassionate office? Does he not rather strive and wrestle with us, that, subdued by his energy, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, we may be prepared to join the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven? Is it then for us, whose souls are kept from the uttermost woes of the second death, and gladdened with the bright hope of everlasting life, by this unwearied exercise of mercy on the part of God—is it for us to rest in sloth and listlessness, short of the blessedness whither the Scriptures direct us? If there were a possibility that sorrow should reach the glorified spirits who have gained the rest of heaven, that sorrow would arise from a recollection of time mispent and lost in earthly vanities, when it might have ministered to the glory of the eternal Trinity, and to their own preeminence among the triumphant armies of God. Why then should we deprive ourselves of the like advantages, and see them hurrying away like the grains of sand in an hour glass, without an endeavour to improve them, until they shall

have their perfect and endless consummation in the service and felicity of God above?

Should the time of salvation pass away, and he who desires to save us, hereafter behold the utter shipwreck of our eternal hope, and cry, "If thou hadst known, even thou, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes," tongue may not declare, nor mind imagine, the anguish of that self-reproach which will be enkindled to torment us with a never-dying flame. Brethren, that irreparable mistake may be committed, unless we walk in watchfulness and prayer, and holy duty. *The night is coming, in which no man can work.* May we then squander an hour with the confident prodigality of him who threw his dearest jewel into the sea, and felt certain that it would be restored to him? Doth it not rather become us to "walk while it is light, lest darkness come upon us?" If the spirits of the redeemed could address us from their thrones of glory, or their voices could be heard through this gross tabernacle of clay, they would indeed animate us to run the way of God's commandments, and to partake with them the fulness of joy in which it terminates. Could one be sent from the abodes of those who are lost beyond the influence and reach of hope, by having neglected their hour of mercy, with what im-

pressive earnestness would he warn us to beware, lest, by the same folly, we come into that place of torment. Surely, a Christian, with the Bible in his hand, and with God's Spirit addressing his soul, may well imagine, that such voices meet his ear, from the infinite opposites of heaven and hell. And surely, while they smite upon his heart, he should arise, in the strength of his Father's all-sufficient Spirit, and say, Henceforth,—all other considerations being postponed to the great business of my eternal salvation, *I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

SERMON XXI.

JOSHUA'S DYING TESTIMONY TO THE FIDELITY OF GOD IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS PROMISES.

JOSHUA XXIII. 14.

Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you: all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

Joshua had accompanied the armies of Israel from Egypt to the land of Canaan. He remembered all the promises of God, and had witnessed their fulfilment. When the chosen heritage was at length placed within the borders of the promised country, he confessed the immutability of the divine counsels, in the beautiful language of the text, and glorified God for Israel.

The experience of every Christian attests the same animating truth. His conflict may have

been severe and long, his trials great and many; his voyage through life variable, eventful, stormy: but when he is about to enter the eternal haven where he would be, his duty and his privilege will alike lead him to acknowledge, *that goodness and mercy followed him all the days of his life;* and to express an humble persuasion, that the God *who guided him with his counsel, will afterward receive him to glory.*

Such a lesson is taught by the impressive words of Joshua. They describe in terms of inimitable beauty, *The delight with which a faithful servant of God bears testimony to the truth of every promise.*

I. IN THE HOUR OF DEATH.

Almost twenty years had elapsed since Israel had experienced the fulness and blessings of Canaan. The time drew near in which Joshua must die. His important work was done: and he might well have pleaded the weight of years and infirmity, as a reason against further toil. But the love of God and of his brethren was a principle which age could not diminish, nor approaching death subdue. He called therefore, for all Israel, and for their heads, and for their elders, and for their officers, to communicate his last advice; and to persuade them, if possible, to serve the author of all their accomplished mercies, with steadfast hearts, and willing minds.

Now what will be the conduct of a dying servant of God? Place such a man before the eyes of your imagination. His conversation has been in heaven. He has trodden the path of faith and holiness, cleaving to the refuge of his Saviour's cross, patiently endeavouring to bear his own, and aiming to glorify the gracious God, whose he is, and whom he serves. The hour of his dismission is come; his warfare is accomplished, his rest prepared. *The body is about to return to the dust as it was, and the Spirit unto God who gave it.* But, as the planet reflects a more pure and brilliant radiance, when it draws nearest to the fountain of light, so will the last earthly hours of such a man be gilded, if sense and strength be allowed him, with a more enlarged communication of the love of God, shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given him. Jesus Christ, having loved his own which were in the world, loved them unto the end: and his last earthly cares were directed to their future welfare. The penitent and pardoned apostle, again commissioned to feed the lambs of his Redeemer's fold, thought it meet to put them in remembrance of their duties and their mercies, knowing that shortly he must put off his earthly tabernacle, even as the Lord had showed him. Paul testified to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, that they all among whom

he had gone preaching the kingdom of God should see his face no more. But the certainty of this approaching separation made him more anxious to acquit his soul in this last opportunity for the exercise of zeal, fidelity, and affection. "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. Take heed therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." Shall not he then, who humbly aims at the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, glory in bearing the last testimony to his Saviour's goodness, and in impressing upon all around him the sacred and weighty obligations with which the unmerited goodness of God has charged them.

I. Consider then, the blessedness of Joshua's EXPERIENCE. These things of which he spake were not cunningly devised fables. He, and they whom he addressed knew in all their hearts and in all their souls the truth and certainty of every declaration. When he left Egypt, with the host of Israel, the future seemed to him, to Moses, and to all the camp like the prospect of a distant country, magnificent in character, and alluring in promise; which yet was separated

by rocks and mountains, and desarts of sand, that might perhaps prove too formidable to be passed. The case was now altered. The ground was traversed, the difficulties overcome, the dangers escaped, the land reached, and trembling hope exchanged for delightful reality.

(1.) *At the very outset of their miraculous career, God had promised them deliverance from the bondage and misery of the land of Egypt.*[1] Did he then alter the thing that had gone forth out of his mouth; or did not the event verify the declaration? Their deliverance was wrought, not by a simple act of power, but by a series of miracles, more stupendous than any that had been witnessed since man was made upon the earth. They had been brought forth from the iron yoke and heavy bondage of their oppressors, with a mighty hand and with a stretched out arm. The generation indeed so delivered had sinned presumptuously, and perished in the wilderness, except Joshua, Caleb, and the younger followers of the camp: but the whole astonishing transaction was written upon their memories, as with a sunbeam, and could not be forgotten. There was a time, when the dying Christian, whose testimony to the fidelity of God we are now considering, lay "tied and bound

[1] Exod. iii. 8, 17.

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with the chain of his sins," unable to deliver himself, and looking around him, with an anxiety that would have assumed the character of despair, if the Holy Spirit had not translated him from the darkness of such a state, into the light of the gospel; and from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Redemption visited him through the death of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. Vainly, however, would this ransom from the penalty of transgression have been given in his behalf, if it had been possible, that he should continue enslaved to the love or practice of iniquity. But whom the God of mercy justifies from the punishment of sin, he sanctifies from its power. The gracious call was heard and obeyed, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." He followed the divine guide, as Peter followed the angel who led him forth from prison. *Sin had no longer dominion over him, because he was not under the law, but under grace.* Becoming the freeman of the Lord, and a new creature in Christ Jesus, he cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. He delighted in that service which is perfect freedom, and in that warfare to which he was solemnly vowed, against sin, the world, and the devil. Often indeed had he felt the returning

power of the enemy who once held him in slavery. But, in these dark moments, the power of the Holy Ghost, and of his Almighty Saviour permitted him not again to be brought under the yoke of Satan. His renewed and sanctified nature pants for an entire deliverance; and longs for the arrival of that blessed hour, when, purified in the blood of Christ from the slightest taint of evil, and with every affection of his soul hallowed from the prevalence, or even from the presence of one pollution, to obscure its lustre for a moment, as the passing breath obscures the mirror, he shall dwell in the presence of a holy God, and among the spirits of just men made perfect. That hour is swiftly approaching: and from the dying bed, whence he shall arise to meet it, he remembers the true sayings of God in the oracles of life. He compares the promises they contain, with the record of his own experience; and what is the conviction irresistibly impressed upon his mind? *God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it, or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?*

(2.) *The divine promise included guidance and provision through the wilderness.* Little would have been gained towards final deliverance, if the chosen tribes had been conducted

out of Egypt, and then cast forth upon the waste and howling desert, that lay between the land of captivity and the land of promise, and abandoned to their own resources. They were however, assured of every needful supply, and of infallible direction to pursue their dangerous way. How well and amply these pledges had been redeemed, their experience could testify. The Red Sea had been passed.—The pathless mazes of the desert had been made plain. God had led the blind by a way that they knew not; he had made darkness light, and crooked things straight before them. Bread from heaven, and water from the bosom of the rock had sustained them. Their raiment had not grown old, neither were their feet swollen during forty years: and now the plenty of Canaan supplied every want, in unfailing abundance. This experience will have its parallel in the recollections of a dying Christian. He was called forth from the house of bondage: but instead of being then left to himself, like a vessel launched upon the pathless ocean without rudder, or chart, or compass, or instruments to discover the height of the sun, or the position of the stars,—a state in which he must have made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, God supplied all his need. The word of salvation in the Bible was a light to his feet, and a lantern to his paths.

The unerring Spirit led him into all truth, and guided his soul away from the seducing track of error. A table was spread for him in the wilderness; and his whole journey was one continued display of goodness. Sometimes, indeed, sense would whisper, that he was straying in the desert, especially when sorrow and affliction surrounded him, and despondency arose within his heart at the hindrances and dangers that beset his path. But even then, God was "leading him by the right way, that he might bring him to a city of habitations." And although unbelief would tempt him to doubt the faithfulness, dispute the power, and call in question the loving kindness of the Lord,—although sometimes he walked in darkness, and the Redeemer's voice appeared not to say to his soul, "I am thy salvation," yet was the hand of mercy never withdrawn, nor the provisions of infinite goodness ever withheld. "When I sent you," said our Lord to his disciples, "without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing." Amidst every privation also, which a faithful servant of God can have undergone, he will assuredly have experienced the interferences of that Almighty liberality, which "does exceeding abundantly, above all that men can ask, or think." Some-

times he might have considered the providences that befel him, rather than the promises to which the soul should cling; and have imagined, that, because the former were occasionally dark and frowning, the latter would fail of accomplishment. Behold him now, in the closing hour of life, with this erring judgment rectified? Behold him, interpreting the providence by the accomplished promise; and blessing the God who led him all his life long. He hath come at length to the threshold of his Father's house in peace—and now prepares to enter it, in the blessed persuasion, that "nothing has been able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(3.) *Among the good things which had been promised to Israel was victory in war:* and most abundantly had their experience verified the assurance. Their enemies, the Egyptians, had perished at the Red Sea. The nations of Amalek had fallen beneath their swords. The cities and armies of Canaan had been destroyed: and, (those few mild rebukes which their disobedience and ingratitude had called forth excepted,) they had pursued an unexampled career of triumphant warfare. They were now placed in circumstances, wherein they could estimate the mercies of past deliverance; and

called upon to praise him who had taught their hands to war, and had covered their defenceless heads in the day of battle.

Equally honourable to the Captain of his salvation is the grateful testimony of a dying Christian. In utter spiritual helplessness, he was obliged to confront enemies whose malignity was only equalled by their power to enslave and destroy. All the steps of his way led him through a hostile country, in which every hill afforded a vantage ground, and every thicket a place where snares and ambush might be laid for his soul. Thousands around him, who went blindly and confidently forward, instead of watching, praying, and taking unto themselves the whole armour of God, that they might be able to stand in the evil day, have been subdued, enslaved, and lost for ever. Thousands who should have held fast their allegiance to heaven, have traitorously transferred it to Satan, and joined his armies in an impious ruinous league against the law, the throne, the honour, and the salvation of God. In what might, then, did the Christian begin his arduous conflict with the powers of darkness?—Even confiding in that delightful promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee," "My strength is made perfect in weakness." His enemies were mighty; but yet the Lord who dwelleth on high was mightier.

Vainly did the world, the flesh, and the devil, oppose his way. That faith which realized the omnipotence of his Saviour—the magnitude of his eternal interests, dependent on the issue of the war—the hope of triumph—and the assurance of reward, enabled him to persevere unto final victory. *He hath been kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.* And now that one struggle only remains, before the warfare shall be complete, and the glory of success eternal, he casts an eye backward upon his conflicts, regards their approaching termination, and his heart rises up to heaven in the language of a praise, soon to be vocal through eternity, *Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

(4.) *The presence of God, and the establishment of his tabernacle, formed an essential part of divine mercy and promise to the tribes of Israel.* "Make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them."—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Once only did the Most High, justly offended with their rebellion, declare his purpose of commissioning an angel to lead them into Canaan. But, subdued by their entreaties, and the intercession of Moses, he relinquished the purpose of his righteous indignation, and dwelt by a visible symbol of his presence in the camp. The

ark was made, the mercy-seat established, and the multitudes of Israel drew nigh to Jehovah in the use of his appointed ordinances. "The Lord their God was with them, and the shout of a King was among them."

"If a man love me," said the Redeemer of the world, "he will keep my words, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Such an intercourse, with all its unspeakable and unimaginable advantages, hath that servant of Christ enjoyed, who is now about to exchange it for the eternal society of the redeemed with God in heaven. If ever that holy and gracious communion suffered interruption,—if ever dreary clouds interposed between his soul and the unchangeable giver of its peace, the separation was due to the influence of sin, and the frown of God which darkened over his spirit, until he had returned to his rest, by fleeing to the atonement of the cross. In the house of prayer, in the ordinances of the sanctuary, in the participation of his Saviour's body and blood, at the sacrament of his passion, and amidst the other means of grace which God delights to afford from the mercy-seat on which the gospel of Jesus Christ exhibits him, did the Christian walk with his heavenly Father.—His journey is now drawing to a close. One step

more, and the presence of the Eternal three in one will be unveiled to his view. One step more, and he will cross the threshold of that everlasting sanctuary in which he shall be a Priest unto God. Before, however, he takes that final step, he gives his willing testimony to the accomplishment of the declaration which he embraced by faith, and which has been the anchor of his soul sure and steadfast,—"I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." *His heart and his flesh are failing: but God is the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever.*

II. Such is the blessed EXPERIENCE of a dying Christian. Equally animating is the HOPE to which it gives birth in his soul, before he shall exchange the bed of death for the throne of the blessed, and the groan of expiring nature for the hallelujahs of heaven. It is not possible, that the mercy in which he has hitherto triumphed should now forsake him, leaving him in the final conflict without help. The lamp of faith and hope would burn dimly within him, if he might not supply it with the experience of goodness, as well as with the promise of love and truth. But leaning upon the same hand which hath led him so near to the everlasting bliss of heaven, he lifts up his eyes, although the hand of death is pressing them

down, and beholds the glory that shall be revealed. Deriving humble confidence from blessings already received at the hand of his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, the awful future, into which a few mortal pangs shall introduce him, beams with the effulgence of divine promise, and with the radiance of unchangeable truth. While they visit his heart, before it ceases to beat, with a sunshine and gladness that even death itself cannot obscure, he waits the last assault, and the blow that is to separate him for ever from the possibilities of sin and sorrow. *Into thy hands I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day. I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* If the saints of the Redeemer's church, before he dwelt on earth, could die in faith, not having received the promises, with what strong confidence, what firm reliance, what joy of faith, may a Christian resign his soul to him who brought life and immortality to light by the

gospel; "who died, and is alive again for evermore, and hath the keys of death and of the unseen world!" Surely he need not fear to trust himself into his Saviour's care and protection, through the last struggle, who has heretofore stayed and rested his hope and his salvation upon the power and promise of God. A passing doubt may sometimes obscure his mind, induced by disease, or by the last feeble assault of a vanquished and despairing enemy—just as a dark cloud may veil the glories of the setting sun, whose edges however will yet be gilded with a splendour that shows the radiance of the orb beyond it. But as in the visible heavens, so will it be in the dispensations of infinite grace to a dying Christian: the gloom will generally be withdrawn from his soul, as the cloud from the face of the sun; and he will descend to his rest in the grave blessed with that tranquil peace of God which passeth all understanding. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

Mark then, *the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.* Carry hence a hallowed remembrance of the testimony which a dying Christian bears to the accomplished promises, and effectual truth of God in Christ Jesus. Leave not, I implore you, the sanctuary, without an earnest prayer, "Let

me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." So may the eternal fountain of grace and love enable you to bear the same witness to the same immutable fidelity, and infinite tenderness. And so, when the minister of Christ shall bring the goodness and grace of your heavenly Father to your remembrance, and recommend them to your heart, before its earthly throbbings cease for ever, your experience may confirm his statements, and make the most delightful acknowledgment of his character as an ambassador of Christ, which he can receive on this side the tribunal of eternal judgment.—*By this,* by my own acquaintance with these blessed realities, *I know that thou art a man of God; and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.*

II. Such a testimony, at the closing scene of a Christian's life, is equally due to the glory of his heavenly Father, and to the eternal interests of those around him: but it is not the last which he will be privileged and blessed to make. When the hour of his release shall arrive, and his soul shall be carried by the ministration of angels, into the presence and joy of God, he will bear rejoicing evidence to the perfect faithfulness of every promise, FROM THE REST OF HEAVEN. Of this final state the circumstances of Israel, newly entered into the peace and

abundance of Canaan, were types and emblems, Joshua addressed them, as men who had sensible and ample witness, in their own daily experience, that the Lord of Hosts had fulfilled every promise of his love. "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you." Even thus will his glorious antitype appeal to the full experience of those who having followed him in the regeneration, "having come through much tribulation, washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, shall be before the throne of God continually, and serve him day and night in his temple." And if, amidst the cares, and warfare, and sorrows, and hindrances, and sins of earth—if amidst all the pains and conflicts of a dying hour, the Christian may acknowledge the faithfulness of God in the covenant of mercy, the language of his glorified Spirit will assuredly bear a more triumphant evidence, from the inheritance of the saints in light. "Now we see through a glass darkly:" and every promise we enjoy is too often tinged with the gloom that broods over this ignorant and sinful world; but *then* shall the Christian behold God face to face. Now he knows the truth of his glorified Redeemer in part: but then shall he know even as he is known—per-

fectly, and for ever. The traveller who has reached the highest attainable summit of the Andes, and stands in the pure and cloudless atmosphere around them, can expatiate over a wide, and almost boundless horizon: while another who remains in the valley below, amidst the haze of mist and vapour, must be satisfied with a comparatively poor and trifling view of the magnificence and beauty that surround him. It is thus with the christian militant, in the warfare of his earthly state, and after his release to join the armies of the blessed, in the rest of God. Here dimness and obscurity may in part intercept, or much distort the prospect of divine mercy, and all the rich consolations of a Saviour's love. But when his liberated soul shall attain the felicities of heaven, he will stand upon an elevation commanding the boundless extent of divine operation, in the walk and world of providence and grace. His eye will be strengthened to behold, and his comprehension will be enlarged, to understand them, with knowledge, love, and wonder, increasing throughout eternity. No cloud will be seen throughout the universe of blessedness to intercept his vision. Every dispensation, by which the Saviour visited and helped him, however misunderstood in the days of earthly darkness and ignorance, will then be fully explained,

every difficulty solved, and every apparent contradiction harmonized for ever. On earth the grace of God led him by a way that he knew not: but when the light of heaven shines full and bright upon the path of his lower pilgrimage, he will know, that however rough it might have appeared, "all the ways of the Lord were mercy and truth to such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." From the elevation of those lofty hills which give a character of grandeur so imposing to the southern scenery of the new world, travellers have beheld with delighted astonishment the whole circle of the rainbow, instead of a little arch, when showers were falling upon the earth beneath them. And when the Christian pilgrim shall have gained the height of the everlasting hills, which the presence of God visits and glorifies continually, that rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald, which to the eye of John in Patmos typified the mercies of God's everlasting covenant of mercy with redeemed man, will be seen in all the perfection of its dimensions, as well as all the beauty and splendour of its colouring. The whole scheme of mercy will be accomplished; and every blessed spirit whom the kingdom of redeeming goodness has embraced, will behold its fulfilment, amidst the universal praise and wonder of eternal life and

glory. The promises may be likened to that pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. How delightful will be their taste, how potent their efficacy of bliss, to those who shall stand by the throne, and drink at the fountain. Newton, the greatest and wisest of mortal men, imagined that the joy of heaven would in part proceed from a more profound investigation of the secrets of nature, and a more enlarged acquaintance with the mysterious laws of her government. If he anticipated with joy that hour and world of light, where the pursuits in which he made such astonishing progress would be all explained, and the veil withdrawn from every difficulty, with what infinite and unspeakable rapture will a holy spirit dwell eternally in the bosom of God; and from that sanctuary of bliss, contemplate the mystery of redemption, and understand the economy of mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ, which was the object of his love and wonder, through every stage of his earthly walk. Every recollection of that man's mind, and every affection of his spirit, will return an answering throb of glad assent to the Saviour's appeal, addressing him from the grandeur of his throne, after the work of mediatorial love shall be accomplished; "You know in all your heart and in all your soul, that

not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass and not one thing hath failed thereof." O blessed Saviour, grant us grace so to improve the redemption of thy cross, and so to illustrate the law of thy love, that such a voice may be addressed to each of us, from the rest of thy kingdom, and that we may each give in the answer of a spirit overflowing with that love, which will be the fountain of bliss in heaven, "Amen, even so Lord Jesus!"

My young Friends! The rich promises of a gracious God and Saviour, are abundantly made to you in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and there await your acceptance. If you are beginning to tread the way of spiritual mercy, to walk humbly with your God, and to illustrate the practical character of that holy faith which can alone enable you to overcome the world, they will cheer and animate you through the perils of your way, and the difficulties of your conflict. They will be daily and hourly realized and fulfilled to your experience, in all time of your tribulation, and in all time of your wealth—they will be your support in the hour of death, and be made good to you for ever in the day of judgment. But let me beseech you to reflect, that as all the promises of God are yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, they are given, *that by them you*

might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the pollutions that are in the world through lust. You cannot appropriate them to yourselves, while you live at a distance from God in Christ Jesus, and in disobedience to his pure and holy law. Nay, every promise to the sincere believer is an awful threat to careless, worldly, profane, and godless professors of religion. Never apply the promises to yourselves, until, in the sincere ardour of unreserved devotion to your God and Saviour, you supremely desire the witness of the Holy Spirit with your spirit, that you are children of God, and may bear upon your souls the impress of his renewed family. The world will solicit your affection, and promise richly to reward it: but beware of the temptation. Satan was magnificent in his promise to our first parents; but when all his assurances were fulfilled, they only knew that God was greatly offended, and that they were naked and wretched. *Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you; and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

(2.) *And ye my brethren who have reached the highest point of the journey of life, and whose downward way will soon lead you into the dark valley of the shadow of death,* I may

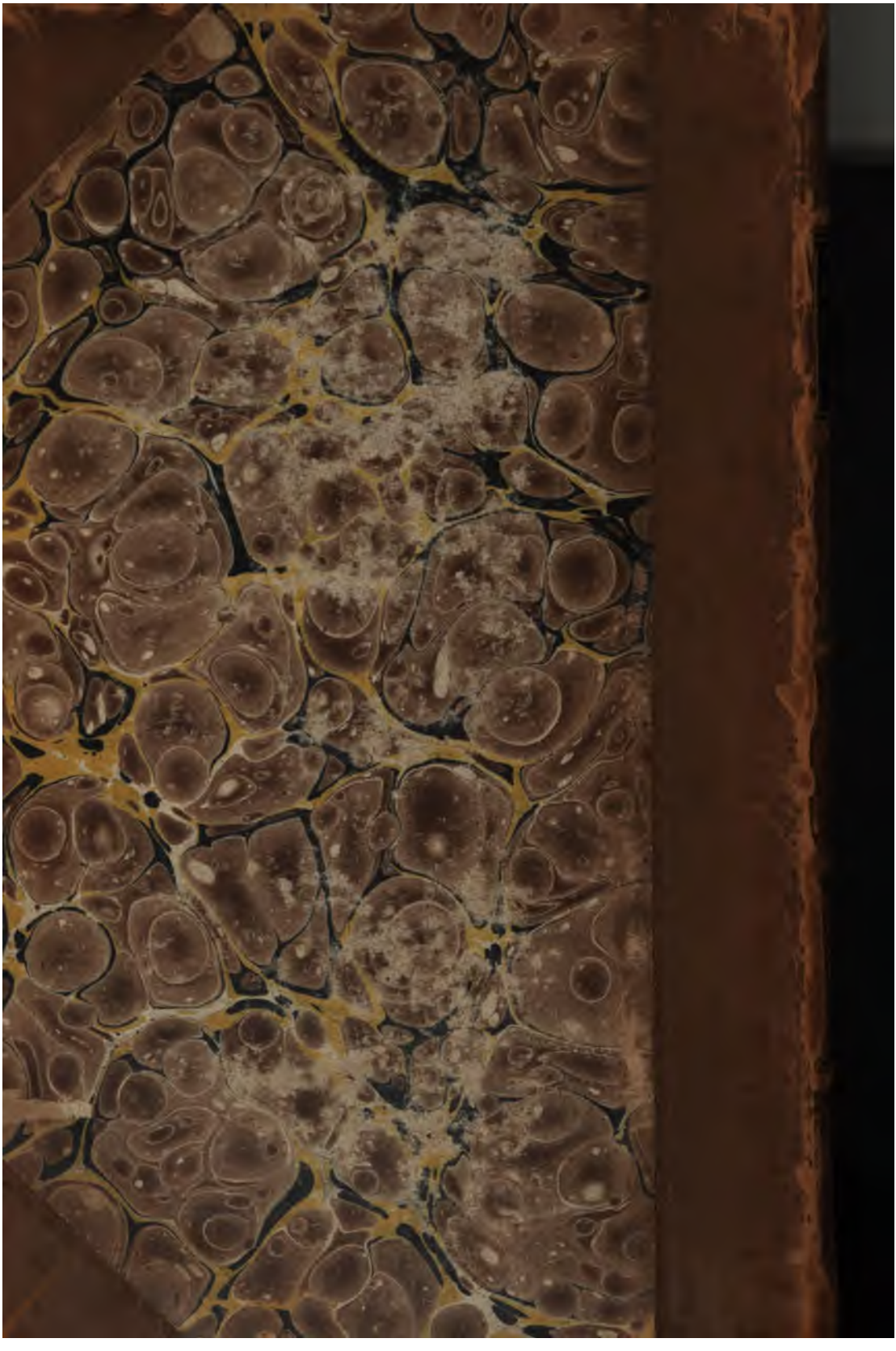
address you, as standing in the midway, between the first promises of your Saviour, made to those who leave the land and bondage of their sins, and the fulfilment of his assurances, to those who shall have entered the rest of his glory. If ye are endeavouring to serve him faithfully, your own experience must have already attested his truth. "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing has hitherto failed." Be persuaded also, that not one thing shall ever fail. *Having then, dearly beloved, these promises, cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the Spirit; perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* Both worlds are soliciting your regard. Are both then equally worthy to obtain it? God forbid, that you should judge so erroneously, so fatally for your soul's peace and welfare! If ye forsake his covenant, and choose another portion, under a delusion so dreadful, every promise you have heard, and every mercy by which its accomplishment has been testified, will be only like coals of fire heaped upon the flax: and when the breath of the Lord shall enkindle them in judgment, the destruction will be total and for ever. He that hath these promises, and would rely upon them, as the refuge of his spirit, must purify himself, even as God is pure. Justification from sin is promised only to him who repents and believes

in Christ—a crown to him who perseveres—and glory to him who is sanctified.

My aged Friends, ye are drawing near to "the house appointed for all living;" and God will soon dissolve your "earthly house of this tabernacle." What is your interest in the assurances of the gospel? Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, how many temporal mercies have been communicated to you. But have the declarations of your Saviour's grace been received into your minds; and do ye exemplify the sanctifying influence of his promises, in your daily walk and conversation? Can you trust that every pledge of his love shall be redeemed; and are ye "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ?" Do not cleave to this perishing world, at the moment when the darkness of the grave is about to withdraw it from your eyes. Have not hereafter to take up your parable, in the utter and final disappointment of that wretched man, who cried, "Had I but served my God with half the zeal with which I served my king, he would not have left me in my grey hairs to poverty and scorn." Your lengthened life has enabled you to bear a more ample testimony to the fidelity of God, than younger servants of his

gospel can offer. The last hour of that life must soon arrive. Will ye not feel it a sacred duty, then to acknowledge how fully, how literally, how wisely, how graciously, how surpassingly, your heavenly Father has fulfilled every promise to your protracted experience? Will ye not own to those whom ye hope to meet again in the joy of eternity, how mercifully the Lord hath borne with your infirmities, and spared to take vengeance for your repeated provocations? Will ye not then delight to confess, that he hath had mercy upon you, according to his loving kindness, and, according to the multitude of his tender mercies hath blotted out your transgressions? Will ye not each desire to raise your voice in the last accents of earthly gratitude, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation?* If ye are to make this testimony, ye must live like Joshua, as the devoted followers of the Lord of Hosts. Are ye uninterested in his love, and alienated from his service? The eleventh hour of mercy is even now striking. O, let the sound smite upon your hearts. Let it invite you with resistless power to attain those gracious promises, "which are ratified by God's oath, than which nothing can be more immutable—sealed by the blood of

Christ, than which nothing can be more precious—testified by the Spirit, than which nothing can be more true—delivered by the hand of mercy, than which nothing is more free—and received by the hand of faith, than which nothing is more sure."

[1] Spurstowe's Wells of Salvation Opened, pp. 21, 22. Edit. 1655.

THE END.